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Bougaud, Emile, 1824-1888.

St. Chantal and the
foundation of the

Dominican College

ST. JEANNE-FRANÇOISE FRÉMYOT, BARONESS DE CHANTAL

AT THE AGE OF TWENTY.

After the original Portrait in the Visitation convent of **Dijon**

ST. CHANTAL

AND THE

FOUNDATION OF THE VISITATION.

BY

MONSEIGNEUR BOUGAUD,

BISHOP OF LAVAL.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ELEVENTH FRENCH EDITION

BY

A VISITANDINE.

WITH A PREFACE BY

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL GIBBONS.

VOLUME I.

NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO:

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION.

The author of this book, "*Histoire de Sainte Chantal et des Origines de la Visitation*," which now appears for the first time in English, ranks among the best biographers of the French nation.

The Right Rev. Ém. Bougaud was born in Dijon, February 26, 1824. He made his ecclesiastical studies at the Seminary of St. Sulpice, Paris; and after his ordination returned to his native city, where he was appointed Professor of Dogmatic Theology and Ecclesiastical History in the diocesan seminary. Feeble health requiring release from this honorable, though onerous, position, he afterward discharged the duty of chaplain to the Sisters of the Visitation, and employed his leisure hours in the composition of those works that have rendered his name celebrated in the religious and literary world.

The first of his works, "*Étude Historique et Critique sur la Mission, les Actes, et le Culte de Saint Bénigne, Apôtre de Bourgogne*," was published in 1859, at Autun. This was followed two years later by "*Histoire de Sainte Chantal*," which met with immense success, and passed through several editions. It was at this period of his life that the illustrious Bishop Dupanloup invited him to fill the post of Vicar-General in the diocese of Orléans. There was at this time frequent question of raising him to the episcopal dignity, but his delicate health always presented an impediment to conferring upon him this richly deserved honor. His other works are: "*Le Christianisme et les Temps Présents*" (five large octavo volumes); "*Histoire de Saint Vincent de Paul;*" "*Histoire de la Bienheureuse Marguerite-Marie*," a task of filial love written at the request of his mother; and, lastly, "*Histoire de Sainte Monique*," which has been

translated into English and given to the public within the last few years.

In November, 1887, Rev. M. Bougaud was nominated to the bishopric of Laval; but his career in the episcopal office was short. The following year, November brought the death of this distinguished churchman and writer.

In manner somewhat reserved, Bishop Bougaud was possessed of a deeply sympathetic nature. His heart was a well whence gushed the warm and whole-souled sentiments that find full expression in his writings.

A word upon the matter of this work would be superfluous, as Bishop Dupanloup, in his admirable Letter, has exhausted the subject by his critical and eulogistic remarks. To the lover of history this in itself will prove intensely interesting.

✠ J. CARD. GIBBONS,
Abp. Balto.

February, 1894.

LETTER

OF MONSEIGNEUR DUPANLOUP, BISHOP OF ORLÉANS, TO THE ABBÉ BOUGAUD, ON THE APPEARANCE OF THE SECOND EDITION OF THE "HISTOIRE DE SAINTE CHANTAL."

THE MANNER OF WRITING A SAINT'S LIFE.

My Dear Friend:

I do not wish the second edition of your *Life of St. Chantal* to appear before I have publicly thanked you for giving us such a book.

I have always loved the *Lives* of the saints. They are my favorite reading. After the Holy Scriptures, no other writings so attract, comfort, and charm me, and I know nothing more beneficial to souls. St. Teresa recommended such reading to the devout, and especially to souls weary of life's struggle. It affords light, consolation, and encouragement to all Christians of whatever condition.

There is, besides, nothing more honorable to religion than such *Lives*, for the saints are the glory of the Church. The history of these great souls, the best, the noblest, the tenderest, the strongest that humanity has ever produced, is an admirable manifestation of Christianity, a magnificent apology for piety. I deem nothing better calculated to animate the fervent, to strengthen the wavering, and even to win back to God and the faith unhappy wanderers misled by the errors of the day.

But to produce so desirable a result, the style of such *Lives* ought to be far above the commonplace. Their writers should be endowed with more than ordinary talent and learning. Many great qualities are requisite, and they are difficult to find. Hence we have few *Lives* written as they should be. Keen appreciation of what constitutes true hagiography, of what lends to a saint's *Life* its peculiar

charm, and the earnest effort necessary to attain it, are, indeed, rare.

Allow me to say what appear to me to be the essentials of a *Life* calculated to satisfy both heart and mind. My attraction for such works, as well as the disappointment in them that I have experienced, has frequently led me to serious reflection on the matter.

In the first place, the writer should be well equipped for his undertaking. He should be a person of sound understanding, and possessed of the exquisite sentiment suited to such subjects; but, above all, he should love the saint. In the next place, he should study thoroughly the exterior life of him whom he portrays, gleaning for this purpose from every available source, from every contemporaneous document. Here neither time nor labor must be spared. The soul must next be depicted. Its struggles, whether of nature or of grace, must be painted in simple, truthful, and living details, so that the saint and his times may be faithfully represented, though in such a way that, far from disappearing under a mass of collateral facts, he may ever retain the first place in the story. The facts should be numerous, well authenticated, and skilfully grouped. They should be arranged with that tact and scholarly order which throws light upon every circumstance. The style, in fine, should be simple, dignified, pathetic, and incisive. This is a sketch of the diverse merits, the considerable difficulties connected with the compilation of a good *Life*. In it may be seen the qualities I have so often sought and so rarely found in such books. In your *St. Chantal*, however, I am happy to say that I have met them. That it has been widely read and relished, that it deserves still more general patronage, is owing to the fact that you have in its compilation followed the true method. You have given to your work the time and the research necessary, and this second edition, thanks to your careful revision, will approach still nearer to perfection. I saw it for the first time in the Visitation Convent of Annecy, when on a pilgrimage to the cradle and the tomb of St. Francis de Sales. I found it by chance. It was a new book, and I opened it, knowing neither its merits nor its author, at-

tracted solely by the circumstance of its being the *Life* of a saint. I carried it off with me to the mountains and, from the very first, read its fascinating pages with astonishment, for it is not often that such works are found all that they ought to be. On opening them, I generally prepare for a disappointment. Not having the honor of your acquaintance at the time, I felt somewhat surprised as I read, which sentiment, however, only added to the charm of the book. The enjoyment I experienced in its perusal (which I purposely prolonged during my solitary journey) has ever since attached me to you. I shall always rank among my greatest pleasures the happiness of relishing such a *Life*, of meeting a great soul, and of living for a time on intimate terms with her,—all which I owe to him who knew so well how to resuscitate her for me.

I have since re-read your book, pencil in hand, and my first favorable impression has been renewed. I have recommended it to others, and they, like myself, have found that charm of charms in the lively interest it awakens, in the grave and practical instruction it contains. The *Life* of this great saint presents, in a succession of scenes the most beautiful, the most varied, the most touching, all the qualities designated by the Apostle: *Quæcumque vera, quæcumque sancta, quæcumque pudica, quæcumque justa, quæcumque amabilia.*

Have I not whilst perusing many so-called *Lives* (a task which I lately imposed on myself) read among other unworthy assertions that there is something about our modern saints *mean, paltry*, and *insignificant?* Ah! well, here is a saint who lived almost in our own day,—the grandmother of Madame de Sévigné, the aunt of Bussy-Rabutin, the grand-aunt of MM. de Toulongeon, whom we all know, a saint touching upon our modern society,—and yet where find, even in the flush of the Middle Ages, even in the earliest centuries, distinction more elevated, dignity better sustained, heroism more pathetic?

As a child, she was pious, modest, innocent. Her energetic and Christian sentiments find a parallel only in the lives of the greatest saints.

In early womanhood, her courage increased with the duties devolving on her. She is, in turn, a wife, a mother,

the mistress of a household, a woman of the world, though never ceasing to be a saint. Whether amid the delights and splendor of a brilliant position, or struggling against the cruel trials of life, from which neither titles nor worldly affluence can shield, she displayed all that magnanimity of soul of which a Christian woman is capable.

Widowed by a sudden and sorrowful accident; living in retirement with her four little ones, whom she reared, with the poor, whom she loved, we behold her advancing to the highest perfection, courageously rising, under the direction of the greatest saint of her age, to heroism and sacrifice unsurpassed.

Lastly, a religious and the Foundress of an Order, she united to a life the most recollected, to a life wholly contemplative, the most solid and fruitful activity. She founded eighty houses of the Visitation, reformed a number of abbeys and monasteries, filled the world with her letters, her works, and the perfume of her virtues,—and all this without for one moment losing sight of her children, whom she directed and whom, with incomparable affection, she incited to the fulfilment of their duties both before and after marriage.

But what puts the finishing touch to the various phases and events of this great and holy existence is, that, in the grandeur of St. Chantal we see the greatness of the seventeenth century. Around her are groups of strong and noble souls, drawn from the world by diverse, though admirable, ways. As we follow her apostolic career in the various foundations of her Order, we are introduced to the old French families and to some of the noblest towns of our old provinces; we learn in detail the stately manners of the times, the ancient traditions, the austere life of former days; we are made acquainted with fathers, brave and resolute, with mothers in the midst of their numerous children, all living happily together, with Christian municipalities, with magistrates and city officials of lofty character, all zealous for the public good even when acting in defence of their rights. Here, too, we see that prodigious movement of faith and good works which characterized the early part of the seventeenth century. It was one of those rare moments in

which the Church reposes happily, like a mother who, after long sufferings, gazes with pride and love upon her children growing up around her, who tastes some moments of peace and happiness before the coming of inevitable storms and struggles.

But however beautiful this exterior and public life of St. Chantal may be, you, my dear Friend, have not confined your pen to it alone. You have dived into her inner life, and on this I congratulate you, for therein is found the most exquisite charm in the *Lives* of the saints. Thanks to your untiring research, we can, day by day, year by year, follow the saint's progress in piety, mortification, meekness, charity toward the poor, and union with God. We see, moreover, the obstacles she had to overcome, the temptations, the sadness, the discouragement that might have arrested or disheartened her; and, finally, which is knowledge still more precious, we learn the remedies prescribed her by her great director, the pious practices he counselled her, the admirable inventions by which he animated, consoled, and strengthened her, leading her from virtue to virtue, from light to light, even to the most sublime love of God.

It is this that makes your *St. Chantal* not merely a work of great interest, but a book eminently practical, a guide that will teach all Christian women how to advance courageously toward God. In it they will see the weakness, the despondency, the interior sadness, inherent to our frail nature; but they will also see them explained and alleviated by one saint, overcome and vanquished by another:—two lessons equally beautiful, and both necessary to souls of our own period.

This is the first point of interest in your work, the first charm I find in it.

Behold the second. It lies in the number, the beauty, the variety, the incontestable authenticity of the papers you have collected. To the pleasure of meeting an incomparable subject, you have joined that of rejuvenating it by means of the most unexpected and important discoveries. One is astonished at the amount of unpublished matter, hitherto unknown to St. Chantal's historians, that fills your book and enables us to follow the saint through the smallest

details of her long career. This accounts for the great interest your history awakens, for the pathos that breathes on every page. You have zealously adhered to truth, you have sought to reproduce it exactly, persuaded, and justly, that truth in itself is sufficiently eloquent.

The saints are the masterpieces of grace. God endows them with celestial beauty, with nobility and greatness, before which human inventions pale; and the best means of being moved and of moving others is, to study them closely and depict them such as they are. In endeavoring to embellish their beauty we spoil it.

A great mind said at the beginning of this century: "The Popes need but the truth." I say the same. To please, to touch, to rouse, to lift souls up to God, the saints, as well as their historians, need but the truth. The writer should know how to grasp and how to reproduce. Very few, alas! possess such ability; therefore, as I have said, few *Lives* are what they ought to be in print. What renders many historians false and cold is, that they regard the saint from afar. They do not study him closely, zealously, lovingly, ardently. They see him only in general, they see him at a distance. They seek him in their own mind, in their own imagination. They do not go back to the earliest sources of information. They are satisfied with second or third-hand inquiry. They have not a great love for the genuine. They lack the strict conscientiousness that should distinguish the historian. Another misfortune is, that they are often in too great a hurry. Under the pretext that their work is impatiently awaited, they devote to it neither the necessary time nor attention. They accomplish in six months what would require as many years. We have an instance of this in a devout historian of lamented memory. Under public pressure, he hurried through the *Life of Mgr. Frayssinous* and that of *Mgr. de Quélen;* consequently, these two grand Prelates, the honor of the French episcopate, are still awaiting a pen to portray them worthily.

The historian should be willing to undergo serious labor. By dint of inquiry, slow and patient efforts, searching through libraries, ransacking archives, and following everywhere the footsteps of the saint, he should, at last, find him.

He should see and hear him just as he was in the days of his mortal life. If biographers did this, they would share the sentiments of the saint's contemporaries, they would be moved and enraptured, their writings would interest us. We should easily perceive by their tone that one fear alone rules them, that of not revealing their saint such as they know him; that one single regret saddens them, that of being unable to paint him such as he appears to them.

This is, indeed, the true method. It requires time, labor, long and close thought, and even fatiguing journeys. But happy they who recoil not before such difficulties! They disclose the soul of the saints; and as in it is found supreme beauty, they love them themselves and lead others to do the same.

This, my dear Friend, is what you have done. You have explored, you have searched, you have seen, and you have read all that relates to St. Chantal. Dijon did not satisfy your holy ardor. You visited Bourbilly, Annecy, Thorens, Monthelon, every place through which the saint passed or in which she once lived. You sought to know her at any cost, to understand her, to breathe, as it were, her very soul. You have succeeded.

And not only were you determined to find and to reproduce the truth; to do it the more surely, you have culled from contemporaries, a fact that greatly contributes to the emotion of the reader. Who can speak of the saints like those that have known them, that have lived with them, that have for long years been under the influence of their virtues? They, above all, who have been their disciples, their friends, who have had the happiness of conversing with them, of being admitted to their intimacy—they speak with an accent that none other can imitate.

Hence it is, that the *Lives* of the saints written by their disciples are usually so charming; for example, the *Life of St. Vincent de Paul* by Abelly and the *Life of St. Liguori* by Father Tannoia. In spite of their length, they possess merit very difficult to excel or even to equal. The saint appears in their pages, simple, artless, and pleasing. We see but him, we hear but him, throughout the whole *Life*. The perfume of truth, simplicity, and piety renders endur-

able a slightly inelegant style. Indeed, we are scarcely conscious of the latter, so much does the saint himself engross us.

No, nothing is comparable to witnesses, to contemporary witnesses; and if, like yours, they speak and write without too great a regard for the public, speak and write only to satisfy their own love and piety; if they depose before the Church, in presence of commissioners appointed by her, and under oath,—where find accents more truthful, more convincing, more touching? And if those witnesses lived in the seventeenth century, if they belonged to that high-toned society which was marked by so much nobility of sentiment, so much justice, good sense, and greatness of soul, in which the very language spoken and written was so beautiful, they furnish new charms. Such charms fill your book. We forget whilst reading it that two centuries separate us from its great saints, from its grand souls. They seem about to appear before us, about to address us.

It must be said in this connection that it is a too frequent error to isolate the saint entirely from his surroundings. In reading such a *Life*, we are at a loss as to what epoch, what society, the saint belonged. Was he ancient or modern? Was he a contemporary of Henry IV. or of St. Louis? The modern critic has inaugurated a better and broader method. He places his characters in the centre of the period in which they lived, and groups around them the principal events of their age. A life thus written possesses great interest. But even this style is not faultless. Beside the facts that every one cannot be taken as the central figure of an epoch and that this method is not suited to every biography, by it one runs the risk, in the case of a saint, of losing sight of the principal idea, namely, his soul, his inner life, the incentive of his actions, the inspiration of his virtues. Some authors there are, talented, sympathetic, sprightly, well-informed, and who really make a thorough study of their subject; they love their saint and they wish to make him loved, but, alas! they stifle him under a mass of historic events and details. We wade through long pages —but where is the saint? What has become of him? We seek but nowhere find.

Doubtless, there should, from time to time, be introduced certain general views, certain glances at contemporary history, but with great reserve. Any other course would stray from the end proposed and cause the saint to disappear under a heap of collateral events of profane history. In the case of a Father of the Church, for instance, the great defect of German hagiographers is to relate all that happened during his time in the Roman Empire. They are, in general, too learned. Their writings are certainly erudite, but they lose sight of their saint. Everything goes into their books. This is knowledge abused. It is ignorance of the hagiographic art. Some contemporary history must, of course, enter into a saint's *Life*, but in due proportion. The saint should always keep the first place. Skilfully culled abstracts may throw much light on certain events; but they should enlighten, not absorb it. Half a page, sometimes a word, suffices for an expert writer to unfold the horizon, to sketch the outline. One of the points on which I congratulate you, my dear Friend, is your tact in condensing generalities. You know how to shun unnecessary excursions on foreign grounds. You remain where the true interest of your subject lies; and yet, without exceeding the limits of good taste, you transport your reader into the very heart of the society in which St. Chantal lived, though always yielding, as is proper, the first place to your saint.

What hagiographers should understand is, that generalities are of little account in the *Lives* of the saints, for in them spiritual profit above all else is sought. Details are of paramount importance, since they edify the reader and serve to make the saint better known. In mere accessories, great moderation should prevail; but of the real subject, the saint himself, let us have details, multiplied details. They show him to us living and acting according to nature and grace, and this is the secret of the thrilling spell his *Life* casts over the reader.

Fénelon, that great master, says very much to the point in his *Lettre à l'Académie:*

"One well chosen circumstance, one word aptly quoted, one gesture indicative of the genius or humor of a man, is an original feature of great value in history. It brings the

individual before our eyes just as he is. Plutarch and Suetonius perfectly understood this truth. It is this that renders Cardinal d'Ossat so pleasing. We fancy we behold Clement VIII. We hear him speaking sometimes without reserve, again in guarded terms, etc." In the *Life* of a saint, the essential object of which is to depict the soul, it is still more necessary to collect carefully the least characteristics that reveal it.

Details, then, facts, exact and numerous, related, as far as possible, by contemporaries and, above all, by friends or disciples, since only they who have seen him and loved him speak of him with genuine enthusiasm. Hence, they must be quoted incessantly. The information derived from such sources will always be far preferable to the rhetorical charms of the most eloquent pen.

Details, particulars, and, above all, *words*. The soul speaks by words. Let the saint speak for himself. If he does not, individuality disappears, and all the saints become alike. We find in them no distinctive characteristic. We neither know them nor love them. We have of them only *Lives* that can be designated by no higher term than flat, stale, colorless, and commonplace. Instead of a living being, we have a fleshless skeleton; we have veritable taps whence issues water not tepid, but cold, frozen; we have narrations without substance, interest, warmth, or life.

Some authors are wholly unable to keep self in the background. They never give place to another, no, not even to their saint. Now, when a writer constantly substitutes his own remarks instead of quotations, it is no longer the saint we hear and see, it is the writer himself. The saint's own words are the diamonds, the precious pearls in the tissue of the narrative; no word of the writer equals them in value. These jewels, however, must not be scattered broadcast without choice and order, nor must they be heaped up haphazard. They must be judiciously set, for it is the setting that shows off their beauty.

But when I ask for details, I demand them true, not optional, not invented, as in the romance, the product of the writer's imagination. A new and very strange style has sprung up in our day. Under the specious pretext of mak-

ing a holy *Life* pleasing to the world, some have adopted the style of the novel. The saint's life is turned into a drama interspersed with long dialogues. We have several such *Lives*, one being of St. Chantal herself.

This style, which exposes the writer to the danger of attributing to the saints sentiments they never had, words they never uttered, which leads him constantly to intrude himself into the saint's place, is simply detestable. If it prevailed to any great extent, it would become a veritable plague.

Surely, it is not the *Lives* of the saints that ought to be dressed up to suit the taste of worldlings. It is the people of the world who should be led to relish the *Lives* of the saints, by having the latter presented to them redolent of the charm that belongs to them. Let writers faithfully practise this rule, and they will discover in the simple truth the most powerful magnet to win hearts to those beautiful souls.

Dates are no less necessary than facts. Let us have an intelligent chronology. At what age did the saint in question practise such or such a virtue, make such or such a sacrifice? These inquiries are neither irrelevant nor indifferent. Biography lacking in dates, like all other history destitute of the same, lacks light. It creates in the mind a painful vagueness. This is the defect of the *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, by M. Chavin de Malan, a work otherwise very interesting.

It is refreshing to listen to Fénelon on this subject: "The saint," he says, "should be painted to life. Show him up such as he was at every age, under all conditions, and in the principal events of his career." His sprightly criticism still pursuing those stupid panegyrists that think their own words a higher eulogy than the story of the saint's own life, he adds: "His own words and actions would make him much better known than can the thoughts and sketches of his biographer's imagination."

Again with exquisite taste he says: "In describing a saint's life, we should dwell principally on such passages as best show forth his nature and his grace, leaving others, however, for the hearer to find out. The best eulogy of a

saint is the recounting of his praiseworthy actions. This gives force to praise, this instructs and interests."

There is a dash of refined wit in Fénelon's recommendation: "Leave a little for the hearer to find out." With still greater truth, we may apply his words to the reader. The unavoidable fault of those brilliant panegyrists that deal out praise with unstinting hand is, that they always fail in dignity and often in truth. Whilst endeavoring to embellish, they wretchedly alter the true picture of the saint. This happened in the case of St. Teresa. Though a soul of incomparable simplicity, some historians ascribe to her a character affected, stiff, fitful, and restless. According to them, she is both obtrusive and quick-tempered. Her speech is wanting in gravity and dignity. Under such false colors, meant to embellish, we fail to recognize the admirable saint any more than in Gérard's deplorable picture, in which he clothes her holy and dignified figure with an eccentric and worldly air.

We might say the same of many other artists. As devoid of taste as of Christian sentiment, they dream not of the supreme incongruity of representing the Blessed Virgin surrounded with vulgar and affected elegance.

Let us again hear Fénelon. "History," he says, "loses by adornment. Nothing is more worthy of Cicero than his remark on Cæsar's Commentaries: *Commentarios quosdam scripsit rerum suarum valdè quidem probandos,* NUDI *enim sunt, recti et venusti, omni ornatu orationis, tanquàm veste detractâ. Sed dum voluit alios habere parata, undè sumerent qui vellent scribere historiam,* INEPTIS *gratum fortassè fecit, qui volunt illa calamistris inurere, sanos quidem hòmines à scribendo deterruit.* The wit despises history unadorned. He wants it clothed, frizzed, and ornamented with embroidery. This is the error of the *unskilful.* The man of judgment and taste knows well that it is not in his power to beautify that nudity, so noble and so majestic."

Who does not feel how much more applicable are these words to sacred than to profane history? How unsuitable the research for vain ornament! What simplicity, what truth, what gravity, *noble* and *majestic*, are requisite! When seeking only the saints, how disgusting to find the

writer turning phrases, rouging and frizzing those grand figures!

I know scarcely any deception more painful. I seek, and that lovingly, the saint himself such as God made him, his soul, his heart, the beauty of his works, and the good odor of Jesus Christ, who dwelt in him. But when I find the writer interested in everything but the saint and his holiness, neither understanding the one nor loving the other, constantly presenting himself before me with his feigned admiration, his supposed talent for writing, his clever style, posing in the narrowness, the chilliness, the bombast of the precise writer, in the vanity of phrases more or less wretchedly strung together, I am disgusted. I despise such art. Whatever it may be, it is infinitely below the true, the great, infinitely beneath the simplicity, the unction, the charm, the eloquence, of genuine hagiography.

Another little remark on style, but one of real importance. Do we ever reflect upon the danger of falling inadvertently into a bombastic tone? The turn of a sentence; one tense instead of another; the *present*, for example, instead of the *perfect* or the *imperfect*, and the author suddenly becomes a declaimer. I do not say that the *present* should never be employed to render the narrative more animated; but I do say that the frequent use of it, as I lately saw in a *Life* otherwise of real merit, suffices to make of the whole work a tiresome declamation.

"Art," says Fénelon, "betrays and disgraces itself in exhibiting itself." This is more true in the *Life* of a saint than anywhere else. I do not mean to assert, however, that art and hagiography should never be combined. There is for hagiography, independently of the special conditions attached to it, the great art of the historian. That art consists in the choice and disposition of materials, in the skilful arrangement of narrative, in the harmonious distribution of parts and of the whole, in the ability to cull and portray facts, to enrich details, to weave the diamonds, the pearls, of which we have spoken, into the warp and woof of a well-told tale. If the biographer limits himself to stating a succession of facts, if he only knows how to amass materials, he has not written a history. He has merely built up a

pile, he has made only a rough cast, *rudis indigestaque moles.*

It may, perhaps, seem to you, my dear Friend, that I have wandered very far from St. Chantal; and yet not for one instant have I lost sight of her. The qualities I demand, as do the faults I point out, bring me back to your work. I am happy to assure you that the former you possess, the latter you have avoided. After a thorough study of St. Chantal, you have portrayed her not in faint outline, but in a finished picture, in which her rich and fruitful life is fully developed. Nothing is abridged, and yet nothing is overdone. All is harmoniously unfolded and enlivened by details. Each fact is presented with the various circumstances that pave the way for it, explain, and throw light upon it. Dates are given, everything presented in order. The flow of the story is easy and rapid. I know not on which to congratulate you, the sobriety of your taste or, as archæologists say, the research and finish of your work.

I shall make no remark on your style. A writer holding your standpoint and filled with great thoughts, unless his taste be perverted, must write well. You do not seek for high-sounding phrases. Of what use would they be in such a work? You write from your heart, simply, coolly, lovingly, without vain research or rhetorical insipidity; consequently, you have discovered the secret of forming a suitable setting for the precious stones unearthed by your labor from the works of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal. They sparkle throughout your pages with a soft and brilliant lustre.

You bore to your task the fundamental quality of genuine hagiography. You not only dived to the bottom of things, but you labored with enthusiasm, without which the result would have been cold and unprofitable. Yes, you studied and wrote, as the Italians say, *con amore.*

This is the quality most frequently wanting in sacred biographers, and the absence of it renders their productions commonplace. They do not write *with love.* The painter, the historian, *par excellence* is love.

To paint, to narrate, the artist, the writer, must be able to see not only with the eyes, but with the heart. To them

who lack this mysterious sense we may apply the words: *They have eyes and see not, ears and hear not.* The figure of the saint passes before them in old chronicles, in dusty folios, but they seize it not in passing. They cannot conjure it up, living and true, before the eye of the soul, because they themselves have not that second sight of the heart which nothing can supply, and of which love alone, enthusiastic love, possesses the secret.

Can we wonder, then, that inspiration fails them in their efforts to portray the saint, since they have never beheld him by the mysterious clairvoyance of love? What follows thence? Pages cold and insipid. How can they cast the divine fire into their writings and into the soul of their readers, since they do not burn with it themselves? They do not love, they do not excite love. We peruse them unmoved, we share their indifference, we feel their want of love. We too often perceive that such writers are more enamored of themselves and their style than of the saint and his virtues. They never forget self. They compose, they form sentences, they make a book, they admire themselves in their productions, they appear on every page, whilst the saint, in a corresponding inverse ratio, gradually disappears and is lost in a vain *litterateur*. We look in vain for his features, his form, for himself; we listen for the sound of his voice. The flame is extinguished, the light, the color, the sweetness have flown, the essential characteristics are absolutely wanting.

Some one says: "I must write a beautiful *Life* of a saint."—Yes, but all is lost if the work is undertaken as a purely literary labor. A higher inspiration is needed for success. The would-be biographer must have been powerfully attracted by the example of him whom he would delineate, charmed with his virtues, and irresistibly urged to share with others his love and admiration.

M. de Montalembert wrote in this way the *Life of St. Elizabeth;* therefore he succeeded in perfectly reproducing the sweet, pure figure of the dear saint, and thousands of readers have blessed God for his work.

But whilst insisting on the point that *Lives* of the saints should be written lovingly, I hasten to add, not with

archæological love, or rather, not to misuse a good word, not with love expressed in an archæological manner. What do I mean by this? Let me explain. The writer passionately fond of archæology does not give to the saint's biography, as should always be done, merely the coloring of his time. He makes it a vehicle for antiquarian and erudite knowledge. He dwells upon the outer life of his subject. He never penetrates to the interior, to the soul—a false point of view, which supposes holiness where it does not exist, which substitutes for it so-called æstheticism, and which does not comprehend that genuine beauty lies in perfect truth. By surrounding his subject with the glow of poetry, he hides the saint, that is, his soul, his inner life, his sanctity. German hagiography is given to this fault, and the same remark holds good of the French. Many writers, childishly enthusiastic over the Middle Ages, find them embodied only in Gothic cathedrals and golden legends, instead of in the truly distinctive spirit and manners of those days. They think they have accomplished wonders when they have described, not the man, not the soul, but the cut of his garments, when they have woven into a style by no means antique some old and disjointed expressions. Shallow research, false coloring, total absence of truth and sentiment, no comprehension of Christian virtue and holiness, no love of the saint,—such are all these books.[1]

To write with love is to write with piety, that is, with the love of God and of souls, with intelligence of the things of God, with the respect of a Christian for the mysteries of the

[1] Here, again, with his usual judgment and precision, Fénelon lays down some wise rules :

"The good historian," he says, "omits no fact that may help to describe his principal characters and disclose the cause of events ; but he will retrench all dissertations fitted only to display the learning of the savant. The writer who is more learned than historical, who possesses more of the critic than of the genius, spares his reader no date, no circumstance however irrelevant, no fact however dry and isolated. He follows his own taste irrespective of that of the public ; he presumes others to be as inquisitive as himself in regard to the insignificant details that excite his insatiable curiosity. A wise and judicious historian, on the contrary, knows how to pass lightly over unimportant facts."

supernatural life. The *Life* of a saint is no ordinary biography. It consists of a series of events belonging to a superior order. What constitutes its greatest charm, its supreme interest? Certainly, the communications with God, the intercourse with heaven, the delicate operations of grace recorded in every line, the exquisite perfume of virtue, the good odor of Jesus Christ exhaled from every page. The historian insensible to these things will never view his subject from the true standpoint, will never grasp the life he aims at writing. The true historian of a saint ought himself to be a saint. He should, at least in some degree, understand the ways of holiness, and he should pursue his work in the spirit of unaffected piety.

No one should attempt to write such a *Life* without a full knowledge of what such a life is; and he will be able to comprehend it only in proportion to his own love and admiration for the virtues of the saints.

One of the great charms of your *St. Chantal* is, that one feels, whilst perusing its pages, that he is breathing the atmosphere of sanctity and, if I may so express myself, rowing down the full stream of purest Christianity. Not that you transport us beyond this world of ours, beyond the struggles and temptations of human life—another capital and too common fault of hagiographers. They represent the saint despoiled of everything human, so that we ask: Was he really a human being, a son of Adam, a creature of flesh and blood like ourselves? The supernatural side of your saint does not absorb the natural, and herein lie its chief interest and veracity. We have before us in the saint the woman, the daughter, the wife, the mother, the widow, each in her turn. Her struggles with nature and grace are everywhere visible; progress in virtue may everywhere be noted.

To sum up the conditions requisite for such a work, I shall say that to hagiography, as to history, may be applied these words of Villemain: "Did we examine in detail the various qualities of mind and style that it calls for, we might well draw back in affright." But though it may be difficult, it is a truly noble task to learn, by long and persevering labor, how to penetrate to the bottom of a saint's

life and soul, to reproduce that soul and that life in a grand narrative, to delineate both in all their truth, attractiveness, and beauty; to recount the details of that heavenward career clearly and intelligibly in a story which moves along rapidly and naturally, captivating us as it goes. Learning may, indeed, stamp its pages, provided it be not unattended by unction and piety. Erudition must never be substituted for love. Let the style be as fascinating as possible, but let simplicity, gravity, and truth be ever retained: this is the great art, the great style. I congratulate you, my dear Friend, on the successful achievement of your undertaking.

Oh, who will give us true historians of our saints! How often I have wished to see among us a great school of hagiography, an association of Catholic writers, religious or lay, to compile the *Lives* of the saints as they ought to be done, to make those great lovers of God truly known and appreciated! I think such a school is now being formed. The way is opened, the correct method recognized. The defects as well as the style of our predecessors point out to us the road. Though suffering a dearth on this point, we are far from being destitute. The seventeenth century produced important hagiographical works, though the *Lives* it has left us are far from faultless in the aforementioned particulars. Tillemont is the sample of multifarious knowledge. He is circumstantial to scrupulosity; he is, also, dry and barren. M. Hermant displays excellent ideas in his *Lives of St. Chrysostom*, *St. Ambrose*, and the greater part of the *Doctors of the Church;* but he is cold, diffuse, and weak, drowned in a flood of useless phrases. Fleury, on the contrary, in the first volumes of his *Ecclesiastical History*, wrote in a superior manner the *Lives* of the holy Anchorets, Doctors, and Bishops. In the same seventeenth century, the anonymous author of the *Life of Dom Bartholomew of the Martyrs* wrote a work that may be denominated masterly. Who does not know the excellent *Life of St. Vincent de Paul*, by one of his disciples, Abelly, Bishop of Rhodez? Though a little antiquated, the style is bold, grave, concise, and full of unction. You, my Friend, had in Mother de Chaugy's *Life of St. Chantal* an exquisite model, though, by

its very perfection, a formidable one. Happily, you have had the good taste to borrow its tone and cull its flowers whilst enriching yourself from the numerous contemporary documents left untouched by the venerable daughter of St. Chantal.

We have few such works belonging to the eighteenth century. Excellent among the *species mediocre*, however, we may mention the biographies of the Abbé Proyart.

But in the nineteenth century hagiography rose to a higher standard, and some beautiful *Lives* appeared. Those of *St. Teresa* and of *Mme. Acarie*, by M. l'Abbé Boucher, Curé of Saint-Méry, are first-class works. Cardinal de Bausset has written a *Life of Fénelon* which leaves nothing to be desired. Later still, M. de Montalembert, as I have said, knew how to cast an exquisite charm of truth, simplicity, and unaffected faith over the *Life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary*. By it he gave a new impetus to hagiography. His two beautiful volumes, the *Monks of the West*, have only one fault, that of exciting a craving for more.

Père Lacordaire followed with unequalled merit, and gave us his beautiful *Life of St. Dominic*. Though less fortunate in his *Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, M. Chavin of Malan deserves well of his readers in his *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*. The *Life of M. Olier*, by M. Faillon, is a grand work. I shall mention, also, among our excellent biographies, the *Life of St. Francis de Sales*, by M. le Curé of Saint-Sulpice, and the important *Life of M. Émery*, though the latter is rather too much abridged. The citations might have been more numerous. The substantial works of our own day on St. Augustine, Cardinal de Cheverus, the Venerable Holzhauser, the Curé d'Ars, and other holy and illustrious personages, may likewise be mentioned with commendation. *L'Histoire de la Trappe*, by M. Gaillardin, is, again, one of our very best works. The handsome and austere figures of the Abbé Rancé and Don Augustin de Lestrange there stand out radiant with truth and light. But I must pause. To enumerate all would carry me too far.

Your *St. Chantal*, my dear Friend, is destined to rank

among the finest of these books. If the end of your labor has been the glory of God, the honor of Holy Church, the advantage to be derived by those to whom you familiarize so great a soul as the Foundress of the Visitation, you may entertain the sweet hope that you have attained the end in view.

✠ FÉLIX,
Bishop of Orléans.

ORLÉANS, *May* 15, 1863.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

Among mental labors there are, I think, few so attractive, few so productive of joy, pure and deep, as the writing of a saint's biography.

The whole subject teems with beauty. We touch only pearls. Elevated language, exquisite sentiments, sublime deeds, adorn every page. The very faults of the servants of God have a beauty of their own. They are full of tears. They exhale the perfume of repentance.

Even the least, the most indifferent actions of the saints possess a charm and teach a lesson. When St. Francis de Sales went to Belley, to see his friend Mgr. Camus, the latter used to take special pleasure in secretly watching him through the little holes he had made expressly for that purpose in the door of his chamber. He saw him come and go, read and write, and all with such modesty, such gravity, such recollection in God, as to draw tears to his eyes. Such is the impression experienced by the study of a saint's life in its smallest details. It produces a perpetual rapture.

If from facts we turn to the records whence they have been drawn, new pleasure awaits us. Those old manuscripts that the saints have touched, those lines they have written, those letters still bearing their seal and superscription, are living relics. We kiss them with respect; they perfume our lips, they embalm our heart.

And if we visit their homes, new charms entrance us. We may, indeed, find them in ruins, but in ruins that speak with eloquent tongues. They are vivified by the spirit of their former occupants. Or, again, we may find them in a state of preservation. Here the saints once prayed, there they consoled the afflicted, and yonder they served the poor. O sweet memorials! We meet them at every step.

Thus is the book written, and its completion awakens fresh

joy. The pen is laid down, and a feeling of sweet satisfaction fills the soul. We say to ourselves: "I have finished my work. May it be pleasing to God! What will be its fate?—obscure or glorious? It matters not. It will, at least, harm no one. It will degrade no mind, it will tarnish no heart. It will not be to me in my last hour a cause of anxiety or remorse." O happiness, too rare in this our day!

At last, the book appears—that dear book, the dream of so many years, into which we had wished to transfuse our whole heart—those pages which should be so full of beautiful thoughts, but which, alas! are far from being what we had designed! Who has ever realized his ideal! And yet, the book goes forth alone, protected only by the great name of the saint whom it heralds. His glory defends it from all attacks, and opens for it the way. Soon we meet some that have read it, and, better still, some that have been benefited by it, souls that under its influence have found the world less enchanting, and pure hearts that because of it have become still purer. Tears have been shed over it, tears of admiration, tears of regret and of holy love. Ah, then, indeed, we taste true joy of heart!

But this is not all. There are some that love our saint as much, nay, more than we do, that loved him even before we did. They are jealous of the beauty of our work, and they would like to see it still more beautiful. They long to remove its least defects, and to add what may have escaped our notice.

There are pious laymen, there are ladies of the world more elevated by their virtue than by their noble birth, who, on reading this *Life of St. Chantal*, have considered it a pious and pleasing duty toward the saint to draw my attention to those little niceties of sentiment and style, the secret of which they know so well.

There are nuns who, in the intervals of choir duty, have passed hours in close examination of their old manuscripts, in order to correct a date or a proper name, answer an inquiry, or throw light upon some obscure point.

There are priests who, in the midst of their apostolic labors, resting and recreating their souls in the contemplation of the virtues of our great saint, have made careful marginal

notes of whatever they thought worthy of attention. They have sent me their annotated copies, though knowing me not, having never seen me, nor, in all probability, will they ever see me.

And why should I not name here with honor and gratitude the pious and truly apostolic community of the priests of St. Sulpice, so worthily presided over by the Rev. M. Hamon, author of the *Life of St. Francis de Sales?* For over a year, the unpublished manuscripts of St. Chantal's *Life* were read aloud before those able critics, and then returned to the writer, the margins covered with most valued remarks. If the first edition of this work merited any praise, it is to their criticisms the merit must be ascribed.

In fine, there are bishops who have deigned to honor the work with their attention, in spite of the onerous duties which, especially in our day, weigh upon them. They have sent me observations and notes, of which my humble work deserves not the honor, and which I must attribute to their reverence for our great saint.

Here I should wish to pause, though not before mentioning the great and eloquent Bishop of Orléans, to whom St. Chantal guided me, and who, after having imposed upon his eyes, already weakened by close application, the fatigue of perusing my work, has deigned to revise this present edition. If critics remark in it noble sentiments, vigorous style, and beautiful thoughts not discovered in the first edition, they will know to whose honor it redounds.

Nor can I forget the gratitude I owe to Cardinal Pitra, the amiable, pious, and learned preceptor of my youth. Neither his affection nor his advice has ever been refused me, and the fact of his having presented this work to the public has greatly contributed to its warm reception.

Such is the assistance with which this new edition has been prepared.

The Superioress of the Convent of the Visitation at Annecy, in a Circular addressed to the whole Order of the Visitation, speaks of it in the following terms :

"You will be pleased to hear that the pilgrims to our holy tombs are daily increasing in number. The relics of our holy Mother have been especially honored this year. During

the month of August, 1861, many of the clergy and laity came from a distance to celebrate her feast even before the time. We think this increase of devotion is due to the new *Life* of the saint, just published by Very Rev. Ém. Bougaud, Vicar-General of the diocese of Orléans. It was to us a source of great pain to see our holy Mother so little known and loved; consequently, our gratitude to him who has so successfully undertaken to spread devotion to her is very great."[1]

The venerable Superioress of Avignon expressed herself on a similar occasion as follows:

"I long to communicate to you the gratification afforded me by the perusal of the *Life* of our holy Mother de Chantal published by Very Rev. M. Bougaud, Vicar-General of Orléans. The work is above all praise. This is the opinion of many noted for their piety and learning. Prejudices against our holy Foundress existed in the mind of some who were ignorant of her virtues. But this work has dissipated shadows, and justice has been done the great servant of God. The evident proof of what we advance is the increased devotion toward her, manifested by daily prayers and novenas."[2]

I do not hesitate to say that these words touched me deeply. To send pilgrims to the tombs of the saints is to send them to a source of light, to a fountain of pure love. To increase in souls devotion to the saints is to open in them the source of all that is elevated, fruitful, and heroic.

If the present edition produces the like result, I shall be most happy.

ÉM. BOUGAUD,

Vicar-General of Orléans.

ORLÉANS, *Palm Sunday*, 1863.

[1] *Circulaire* of Mother Marie-Justine de Maugny, Superioress of the first convent at Annecy, May 21, 1862. Annecy, 4to, Burdet.

[2] *Circulaire* of Mother Rose-Augustine Marcel, Superioress of Avignon, November 27, 1862. Avignon, d'Aubanel Frères.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE Order of the Visitation still possesses valuable manuscripts relating to its Foundress, St. Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal.[1] These manuscripts, written during her lifetime, but secretly and without her knowledge, were in the seventeenth century distributed among the different convents of the Order, in which they have remained until the present day, unpublished and absolutely unknown. Although I had had for many years frequent communication with one of the principal houses of the Visitation,[2] it was by mere chance, and at a moment in which I least thought of it, that these precious manuscripts fell into my hands. I read them, and I was fascinated. In their incomparable charm of sentiment and style, I discovered the highest admiration for the venerable Mother de Chantal, and the most tender and faithful remembrance of her. They ascribed to her words of such beauty; they related instances of such heroism; in all that was recounted of her there appeared evidences of elevation of character so constant and so sustained, so rare a union of firmness and tenderness, of energy and affection, that a desire to write her life took possession of me. I opened that compiled in the eighteenth century by Canon Marsollier,[3] but its very first lines astonished and saddened me.

[1] This is the full and authentic title of our saint, that under which the Church honors her, and which alone can be given her in the liturgy. But as St. Alphonsus de Liguori is constantly called St. Liguori by theologians, so is St. Jeanne-Françoise de Chantal generally styled St. Chantal, and many know her only by this appellation. Hence the title of this work.

[2] The convent of the Visitation at Dijon.

[3] *La Vie de la Vénérable Mère de Chantal, Fondatrice, Première Religieuse et Première Supérieure de l'Ordre de la Visitation de Sainte-Marie,* by l'Abbé Marsollier, Canon and Provost of the Cathedral

I do not accuse Canon Marsollier. He wrote in a degenerate age, which, among its many other defects, numbered that of its inability to comprehend the life of the saints. The Canon undertook the defence of the venerable Mother de Chantal, and to gain for her the sympathy of a world that understood not the great and the heroic, he lowered her to its own standard of excellence. His work presents neither proofs of research nor recourse to proper sources of information. It exhales not the perfume of departed years. Dull and discordant diffuseness, together with long philosophical dissertations, make up the book. So much for the Abbé Marsollier. When, wearied and disgusted, I closed the book and turned again to my old manuscripts, I seemed to be mounting from a low, sterile valley to one of those beautiful mountains whose pure air and bright sunlight, glorious horizons and magnificent peaks, lift up the soul and fill it with enthusiasm and peace.

I closed Canon Marsollier's book never again to open it and, turning to look for another *Life of St. Chantal*, picked up the *Mémoires* written by Mother de Chaugy.[1] Here I found again the attractions that had disappeared in the mazes of Marsollier's work. Here I found the same beauty, dignity, and heroism. It was, indeed, our great saint, though not her whole self. The religious was incomparable; but what had become of the wife, the lady of the world, the mother,—yes, the mother, above all,—what had become of her? The little ones so loved and later on, alas! the cause of so many tears—I sought, but found them not. And what astonished me most was, that the Foundress herself was absent from these *Mémoires*. Those beautiful and interest-

Church of Uzès, 2 vols. 12mo, Paris, 1717. "Marsollier, the most faithless of biographers," says Rev. M. Hamon, and he proves it. (*Vie de Saint François de Sales*, 3d ed., Preface.)

[1] *Mémoires sur la Vie et les Vertus de Sainte Jeanne-Françoise de Chantal*, 1 vol. 8vo, Paris, 1845. It was these *Mémoires*, which appeared in 1644, transformed and arranged by Bishop de Maupas, under the title, *La Vie de la Vénérable Mère Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot*, etc., by Messire Henry de Maupas, Bishop and Count of Puy, etc., 1 vol. 4to, Paris, 1644. The Rev. M. Boulanger, chaplain of the convent of the Visitation at Mans, published the edition of 1845, according to Mother de Chaugy's original text.

ing pages depicted a saint of peculiar type, one whose position called for action, but who, nevertheless, did not act. It was long before I was able to solve the mystery, but I succeeded at last.

When the venerable Mother de Chantal appointed the young Sister de Chaugy her secretary, she charged her to collect and arrange the history of all the foundations hitherto made; but, in her profound humility, she prohibited any mention of herself. It was, of course, necessary that her name should sometimes appear; as, for instance, that she arrived on such a day, in such a city, and with such and such Sisters. But this was all that she would permit, and even this she would fain have suppressed. Of the beautiful sentiments that escaped her lips, of those actions replete with faith, humility, zeal, and love of God that accompanied her every step, she suffered not the least word. If Sister de Chaugy forgot the prohibition and allowed some reference to the virtues of the Foundress to escape her pen, Mother de Chantal, who carefully perused the manuscripts, would summon her to her cell, make her kneel down and, after having severely reprimanded her for speaking thus of a sinner, order her to rewrite the history. Such a prohibition was certainly not acceptable; consequently, in order that the Church and the children of the Church might not be deprived of these great examples of holiness, Mother de Chaugy secretly rewrote her *Mémoires*. Not that she wished to write a *Life* of the saint; very far from it. She desired only to supplement what had already been written, but which humility—Mother de Chantal's humility—had forced her to leave incomplete. This accounts for the fact that the Foundress is not depicted in these *Mémoires*. She is to be found elsewhere. For the same reason do we find so little mention of those great souls that worked together with St. Chantal. They have each a separate history. Lastly, the fact that these *Mémoires* were written for the cloister explains why so little is said of the saint's children, why the wife, the mother, the mistress of the house, the lady of the world, receive like the Foundress but a passing word.

Is it not, then, desirable to unite these different documents,

to blend them together, and let them complete one another? Is it not well to throw light upon them by means of the innumerable *Letters*, those *Conferences* so beautiful, those *Mémoires* so curious, and that vast collection of papers belonging to the canonization of St. Chantal, and by their aid try to present a perfect portrait of the great saint? And since this was not done in the seventeenth century, and it would have been an impossibility for the eighteenth, will it not be well worth the trouble to undertake the task at the present period, when it will be understood and appreciated, in this nineteenth century, illustrious for the revival of faith and piety? It was thus I reasoned, and the idea of composing the work now presented to the public took possession of me.

From that moment I began and continued for several years with increasing diligence a close study of the real character of St. Chantal, her noble qualities, her beautiful mission, so suited to the aspirations, the needs, and the dangers of modern times. This study decided me to undertake the work.

I.

What first impressed me was the character of the saint. This admirable woman possessed in an eminent degree precisely the virtue most wanting at the present age, and whose absence is, perhaps, the deepest wound of society. That virtue is fortitude. In turn a daughter, wife, mother, mistress of a household, the centre and delight of an intellectual circle; later on, a widow, a religious, the Foundress of an Order, and toward the end of her life burdened with the direction of more than eighty convents all founded by herself,—in all these difficult positions she acted with a loftiness of purpose amounting to heroism. Her magnanimous soul thirsted for sacrifices, and she made them in so extraordinary a manner that the world has never been able either to understand or forgive them. Saints, however, have looked upon them with enthusiasm. "I have found in Dijon," exclaimed St. Francis de Sales, "what Solomon could not find in Jerusalem—*the strong woman* in Madame de

Chantal." St. Vincent de Paul surpassed the holy Bishop of Geneva in his praises of her. If the moderation of the saintly priest were not so well known, the portrait he drew of this admirable woman might be looked upon as exaggerated. After speaking of her in a strain of the highest eulogy, he affirms that, during the twenty years she was under his spiritual direction, he never observed in her the least imperfection. The Church, moreover, the infallible judge of the true character of her saints, has confirmed these praises; and among all the virtues of St. Chantal, she seems desirous of celebrating in her sacred liturgy but this one, that admirable strength of soul with which, full of the love of God, she passed through life and attained the highest degree of perfection.[1]

This magnanimity of soul is, in reality, not only the most beautiful feature in her character and the inspiration of all her actions, but it is the very secret of her mission, the true reason of her advent in the sixteenth century, the distinctive quality that gives her prominence among the brilliant galaxy of saints who adorn that epoch.

It is well known how numerous those saints were. That rebellion of pride and passion, so falsely entitled the Reformation, which disturbed the greater part of the sixteenth century, roused toward the close of the same age one of the grandest reactions that ever consoled the Church. Luther had just died, Calvin and Henry VIII. were still living, and the world was resounding with prophecies of the approaching fall of the Church, seasoned with invectives against her irremediable corruption. At that moment arose St. Pius V., St. Charles Borromeo, St. Philip Neri, St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, St. Teresa, St. Francis Borgia, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Chantal; in a word, all the greatness and glory of the true Church united as if by design at the period in which the so-called Reformation was displaying its scandals and extending its ravages.

[1] Omnipotens et misericors Deus, qui beatam Joannam Franciscam tuo amore succensam *admirabili spiritus fortitudine* per omnes vitæ semitas in via perfectionis donasti. . .

But what was still more admirable than their number was the peculiar character of each of the saints of this century. It might have been said that God, by one of those beautiful inspirations with which He hastens to the assistance of His Church and, at the same time, by one of those delicate marks of affection that reveal the Father's heart for even the most ungrateful nations, had personified in ten or twelve saints of the first rank each of the prominent features of that Catholicism which had been outraged and ignored by heresy. Its austerity, for example, shone forth in the holy Archbishop of Milan, who, although Prince-Bishop and Cardinal, practised for twenty-two years mortifications that would have astounded the solitaries of the Thebaid; its gentleness was depicted in the Bishop of Geneva, whose name even now, after a lapse of two centuries, possesses magic power, and who, by the charm of his amiability and the depth of his learning, won back to the Church sixty thousand Protestants; true proselytism, the divine propagation of the faith, appeared in that wonderful Xavier, who restored to the Church by his zeal and humility more souls than had been snatched from her by Luther's pride; the love of God, sublime and pure, was revealed in St. Teresa, charity in St. Vincent de Paul, angelic innocence in St. Rose of Lima—but I am wandering from my subject. Let us return to St. Chantal.

For the morrow of the Reformation, a period saddened by great apostasies and shameful falls, she was to be a brilliant revelation of the spirit of fortitude. It was for this that God lavished all kinds of temporal blessings upon her, a great name, a large fortune, a husband worthy of her, and four lovely and gifted children, so that, when the moment arrived for her to tear herself away from bonds so strong and tender, the world should be forced to acknowledge that she was actuated by a divine impulse. And because this sacrifice, great as it was, would not have sufficed to reveal to men the divine power dwelling in the Church, both before and after she left her family God nailed her to the cross and drenched her with sorrows. As a wife, she wept the early death of her husband; as a mother, she saw die, one after another, nearly all her children and grandchildren; as

a religious, she was attacked by strange diseases and tortured by frightful temptations; as the Foundress of a Religious Order, the world rose up against her, crowded obstacles in her way, and basely calumniated her. But it never succeeded in vexing or discouraging her. Her great heart rose superior to every trial, and during fifty years of uninterrupted martyrdom she presented to an admiring world a striking example of that Christian magnanimity which the Holy Scriptures so aptly personify in the *strong woman.*

Madame de Chantal's firmness of character did not in the least diminish the tenderness of her affection. Every new sacrifice rent her soul, every victory over the claims of nature drew from her a cry of pain; and it is precisely this that renders her heroism so striking. If with tearless eyes she had torn herself from the arms of her aged father, if cold and unmoved she had extricated herself from the embraces of her children, who would not have shuddered at such a display of fortitude? But Madame de Chantal's sacrifices were watered with her tears. When obliged to step over the body of her son, maternal love gave vent to tender sobs and tears; and later, even when a religious, we see her at the death of her children fall so ill from grief that it was thought necessary to administer to her the Last Sacraments. And yet, nothing had power to arrest her in her enterprise or make her waver in her mission. This is the fortitude that comes from God. This is the courage that elevates souls above themselves, though without rendering them callous.

Just as this admirable quality does not extinguish the affections, neither does it exclude prudence. Who possessed more prudence than Madame de Chantal? What correct judgment! What power of discrimination! What good common-sense! And, as if not yet fully equipped to face a world always ready to raise a cry of denunciation, Almighty God gave to St. Chantal for guides and counsellors St. Francis de Sales and St. Vincent de Paul, two of the most enlightened spiritual directors of the period, and acknowledged such by the public voice. The former directed her for sixteen years; the latter for nineteen. Influenced by

the mildness of the one and the prudence of the other, she accomplished her most heroic sacrifices with courage and moderation, prudence and energy so perfect that, as St. Francis de Sales justly remarked, "the good will find therein much to admire and the wicked nothing to condemn."

When, after a long life, whose every step for seventy years was a sacrifice, Madame de Chantal died, St. Vincent de Paul beheld her soul ascending to heaven, not under the form of a dove, as is related of several other saints, but under that of a fiery globe, as if God wished to show by that glowing symbol of what the soul of this incomparable woman was made.

Such examples may always be recalled with fruit. But what age ever had more need of them than ours? When has there ever been seen so general a decadence of morals and affections? When was it ever more necessary to surround enervated souls with the strength-infusing atmosphere of good example? This is the first reason that induced me to write this *Life*, and the first kind of interest attached to it. But it is not the only one.

II.

Among the many facts that consoled the Church of France at the epoch in which Madame de Chantal lived, and which paved the way for the glory, temporal and spiritual, of the *great age*, there is one whose beauty claims attention, and which reveals more forcibly, perhaps, than any other, the fecundity of Catholicism.

I allude to the simultaneous appearance of three distinct creations in the religious life—the French Carmel, the Visitation, and the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity. They were creations, not only distinct, but original, perfect, and admirably adapted by their very diversity to the task of calming the passions and soothing the misfortunes of the period that gave them birth.

I shall here give a rapid sketch of each of these Orders, and lay before the reader their points of likeness and dissimilarity, that he may understand the principal events recorded in this work.

The Carmelite nun leads a poor and austere life. She sleeps upon planks, goes barefoot, fasts nearly every day in the year, and frequently disciplines herself to blood. Thus does she relieve the soul of the weight of the body and fit herself for contemplation. Separated from the world by grates "which strangely threaten those that approach them," [1] she is, moreover, hidden from its gaze by a veil which completely envelops her. *Her* distinctive characteristic is penance.

The Visitandine knows neither the long fasts nor the hard bed nor any other of Carmel's austerities. Mortified, however, for without corporal sacrifice there is no religious, and still less no contemplative, life, the daughter of St. Francis de Sales immolates herself by interior sacrifice, and by her attention to maintaining herself recollected, meek, humble, amiable, and agreeable to all and at all times. She has, also, her cloister and her grates, though in a less forbidding form, and the veil that the Church places upon her head does but shade her from the eyes of men. *Her* distinctive characteristic is meekness.

The Sister of Charity has neither veil nor grates nor cloister of any kind; or rather, according to the expression of St. Vincent de Paul, the abode of the sick is her convent, obedience is her cloister, the parish church is her chapel. When surprise was expressed at the holy Founder's not having given her at least a veil to protect her in her perilous mission, he replied in these beautiful words: "Holy modesty shall be her veil." Free to go and come, she searches out the miserable, and, victim of another kind, she sacrifices herself in garrets, in hospitals, in prisons, on the battle-field, and wherever there are wounds to dress, tears to dry, souls to comfort or assist. *Her* distinctive characteristic is charity.

These three types, so pure and so perfect, arose almost at the same moment in France, just after the sixteenth century had piled up its ruins, and on the eve of the eighteenth, which was to make still greater ravages. They came, as it were, between two tempests, as if the Church, profiting by the

[1] Bossuet: *Sermon de Vêture de Mademoiselle de Bouillon.*

momentary truce, had made a supreme effort to prepare all the help and consolation needed for the coming days of tribulation.

The Carmelite appeared first, 1604. She came from Spain, where she had awakened to new life under the burning inspiration of St. Teresa, and she was received with enthusiasm. The union of contemplation, penance, and divine love has always ravished souls, and the seventeenth century was still too penetrated with ideas of faith not to comprehend its sublimity. The severity of Carmel, moreover, responded to those yearnings after penance, to those practices of austerity still so cherished in the early part of the *great age*, which witnessed the reform of the old monastic Orders and the advent of the Abbé de Rancé and La Trappe; but, after having been the glory of this epoch, this rigorism became its scourge when Jansenism sought under its cloak to overthrow the Church. I should add, perhaps, that the dissoluteness of Louis XIV., the corruption and scandals of his court, were soon to disquiet the conscience of the less worldly, and awaken in them the spirit of expiation. Owing to all these reasons, the propagation of Carmel was a brilliant success. It had no sooner crossed the Pyrenees than, to use the expression of Fénelon, "the whole Church of France longed for it."[1] As soon as it appeared, there flocked to its sanctuary crowds of souls, austere, zealous, avaricious of corporal penance, souls burning with desire to pour a few drops of their blood into the balance then weighing the destiny of the age. They were victims consumed by penitent love, holocausts who have never since ceased to burn before God, and who, even at the present day, after Voltaire and the Regency, and on the morrow of the French Revolution, are more numerous and more fervent than ever.

Next appeared the Visitation, 1610. It responded to other necessities, satisfied other attractions. There are in the world not only ardent souls, but also gentle ones, and sometimes the former are not always possessed of a robust body. There were, consequently, in the seventeenth century, and

[1] Fénelon: *Sermon pour la Fête de Sainte Thérèse.*

there have been ever since, numbers of most generous women capable of the greatest sacrifices who, wishing to forsake the world, knew not where to seek a refuge. Some of them felt no inclination for the great corporal austerities then practised in the cloister; others with such an attraction had not the bodily strength. Like plaintive doves, they flew around the ark without gaining entrance. By instituting the mild manner of life of which they had need, and by joining thereto contemplation and love, St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal produced a type unknown to preceding ages, whose beauty enraptured the seventeenth century. Face to face with Christianity severe and morose, such as Jansenism sought to make it, and which was soon to become repulsive and impossible, the loving heroism of the Visitation won crowds of souls. "Do you know," wrote St. Francis de Sales, in 1619, to his holy co-operator, "that some pious persons have told me to-day that the mildness of our Order is so much to the taste of the French that you will cast all other religious houses into the shade, and that, having once seen this Mother de Chantal, all others are forgotten." This was, indeed, uttered in a spirit of pleasantry, for every Religious Order is intended for certain souls whom it will draw to itself by an irresistible attraction. But in this ingenuous expression we see the reception given to the Visitation. Like all the divine works, this gentle Institute appeared in its own good time, and found numerous souls awaiting it. In a few years, there were over a hundred Visitation convents in France. And side by side with its propagation, which nothing could arrest, how great its gentle and blessed influence! Those hundred houses, whose number is now doubled, radiated sweetness around them. And when was this? At the very period in which constitutions were weakening, in which piety felt the need of greater recollection, of a more interior life, of more intimate union with God,—all which was being lost in austerity. Admirable secret of the Visitation! This is what it reveals to the world, this is what explains its providential appearance in the early part of the seventeenth century, the aurora of modern times.

The Sister of Charity came last, 1634. Were we to judge

by our ideas of the present day, we might think that she would have been more enthusiastically welcomed than either of the other two. But this was not so. The seventeenth century, in its first period of a Christianity so pure and sublime, esteemed nothing so much as penance and prayer. It reserved all its enthusiasm for the cloister. Besides, the idea of religious women without grates, without inclosure, devoting themselves to the relief of the poor, not as hitherto, in hospitals, but visiting and nursing them in their own homes—an idea which to us appears so simple, so beautiful, so effectual, and, above all, so *French*, but which in reality was so bold and so novel—astonished some and alarmed others. It came, in fact, near being annihilated by the storm of objections raised against it. It was for the following centuries, for which it had been created, to place this new type in its true light and reveal its beauty. The time was approaching in which prayer and penance would be no longer understood; in which men, eager only for the things of earth, would esteem services rendered the body a thousand times more than the care given to the soul, and in which religion, ignored in its most sublime inspirations, in its most precious favors, would have need of a new sign to win recognition and worship. This sign was to be the Sister of Charity. And as the ages most avaricious for material joys are ever the most productive of misfortunes, the most fecund in tears, what sign could have been better chosen? When in our streets and public places, in the garret of the workman, on the battle-field, we behold the white cornet, the pure frank gaze, the beneficent hands of the Sister of Charity, impiety itself is moved, and the heart that understands neither Carmel nor the Visitation appreciates this humble Sister who dresses the wounds of the poor, consoles their sorrows, dries their tears, and, having become a mother without detriment to her virginity, gathers together and nourishes their children.

Thus does God proportion His assistance to our misery. Thus, at every crisis of humanity, there come forth from the heart of the Church, from that heart tortured, but inexhaustible, institutions the most beautiful, the best suited to the wants of souls and the perils of society.

If a person, familiar with St. Chantal's character, but

ignorant of her history, were asked to point out which of these three religious bodies claimed her for Mother, certainly he would not name the Visitation. That mild Institute does not seem adapted to her strong and ardent nature. And, indeed, the saint herself did not readily incline to so gentle a rule. Her first aspiration was for Carmel. She loved its strict inclosure, its severe penance, its continued contemplation. Forced to renounce her project, for God, who had other designs over her, raised up insurmountable obstacles in her path, she would be a victim of charity. Since the austerities of Carmel were refused her, she would, at least, have the self-devotedness and the fatigue attendant upon the service of the poor. As the Sister of Charity had not yet sprung into existence, Madame de Chantal herself created her in 1610, twenty-three years before St. Vincent de Paul founded his admirable Congregation. St. Chantal was, in the full sense of the term, the first Sister of Charity. Hence the title *Visitation* given to her Institute, and by which it is still known, since its principal end was to visit the sick. But suddenly, at the very commencement of the work, an invisible power arrests her, obliges her in spite of herself to return to her abandoned cloister, to renounce the service of the poor and the visiting of the sick, and to adopt her first plan minus its austerities. Interior sacrifice, joined to contemplation, was to be the characteristic of the new Order. Thus was born, without man's aid and in spite of him, by that mysterious action of God which is nowhere better manifested than in the foundation of Religious Orders, the new type of the Visitation. Like her holy director, and even more justly, for she had offered greater resistance than he, St. Chantal might have said: "I know not why they call me Foundress, for I have not done what I wished to do, and I have done what I wished not to do."

Why, in the seventeenth century, was the saint whose distinguishing feature is fortitude chosen to found an Institute whose characteristic spirit is mildness? How did God lead her to this, even, if we may so say, in spite of herself? By what means did He prepare her mind, her heart, even her physical frame, for a work apparently so unsuited to her? All this we shall see in her *Life*, and in it we shall

find cause to admire the tenderness and the depth of the ways of Almighty God.

Of all the means by which, after having chosen Madame de Chantal, God placed her at the head of this great work, the principal and the most interesting, as we well know, was her meeting at Dijon with the holy Bishop of Geneva, whence resulted their pure and world-renowned friendship. This energetic woman needed assistance in a work so little in harmony with her nature, and God associated with her the meekest, the most amiable, of all His saints. Together they founded their humble Institute, as they delighted to term it; together they drew up its Rules, from the most important to the very least; together, above all, they called to it numbers of souls and formed them after their own likeness—amiable and resolute, magnanimous and humble, pure and cheerful, souls who scarcely touched the earth, souls already heavenly in their aspirations and fervor. Sweet picture of the rising Visitation! fruitful years in which the Institute took life from the inspiration of two saints, I shall try to delineate you, and if God deigns to guide my pen, you will speak to us of beautiful days, you will make us love virtue!

III.

Some of our readers will, perhaps, regret that St. Chantal founded a cloistered Order. Many will, doubtless, imagine that she would have rendered greater service had she devoted her Institute, as she had so long desired, to the relief of human misery; for the cloister is ignored to-day, and little value is attached to prayer and sacrifice offered for the salvation of souls and the welfare of society. Such thoughts spring from ignorance.

And yet, what would become of the world abandoned to its passions and saddened by so many misfortunes, did we content ourselves with relieving its distress and even with calming its passions; if, whilst men are sending up to the ears of God their cries of impiety, of blasphemy, and impurity, the consecrated lips of virgins did not plead for mercy, did not disarm His justice?

What, in particular, would have become of that seventeenth century whose unbridled passions walked side by side with its heroic virtues? Think we that it could have escaped the ruin that threatened it, that it could so majestically have finished its course without that multitude of cloisters whence arose, by day and by night, prayer so pure and so powerful? Neither Bossuet nor Fénelon thought so; and in order to avert the tempest whose distant roaring was already sounding in their ears, they appealed incessantly to the penances of Carmel and to the gentler supplications of the Visitation.[1]

In earlier times, when the old Roman Empire was crumbling rather under the weight of its crimes than under the rule of the barbarian, what sustained it for centuries on the very brink of the abyss? St. Gregory the Great affirms that it was the prayers of three thousand virgins whom Rome had received from the devastated convents of Italy. They had devoted themselves to the task of rendering to the decaying Empire the greatest service of which it stood in need, namely, that of prayer, suffering, and self-sacrifice.

And if our modern society, empoisoned by sophistry, enervated by moral depravity, has not yet perished, it is neither glory, genius, power, nor policy that has wrought the miracle. It is to be ascribed to that prayer which ascends from hearts consecrated by love and rendered omnipotent by sacrifice.

I am persuaded that the greater number of those who will read this work will not finish it without having caught a glimpse, at least, of these great truths. But should they be insensible to them, I do not despair of convincing them from other points of view of the great importance of cloistered Orders. They will, at least, learn what are those impenetrable grates about which they know so little but say so much. Yes, they are, without doubt, impenetrable to the din, the vanities, and the passions of earth; but they daily open to a multitude of souls, some of whom, innocent and in the full bloom of health, trample mundane glory under

[1] This thought is repeatedly reproduced under various forms in the sermons preached by Bossuet and Fénelon at the reception of the habit by novices.

foot, and bury themselves forever behind them; whilst others, sad, troubled, disheartened, or guilty, go there to seek, in a few days' retreat, a little spiritual refreshment, light, and peace. Who shall say what consolation is found in those unknown or despised abodes, what plans of repentance formed, what wavering virtue strengthened, what souls on the point of sinking invigorated and encouraged! Above all, who can tell the foundations of peace and happiness for families and for society in general which, thanks to the blessed institution of boarding-schools, are laid behind those grates! It was from those veiled sanctuaries that so many eminent women went forth, to become the ornaments of the seventeenth century. Supported by the invincible virtue of the priesthood and the reformed Orders, they would have been the salvation of France could the seventeenth century have been saved from the misfortune of engendering the eighteenth. The most brilliant and intellectual woman of that period, the Marchioness de Sévigné, was the granddaughter of St. Chantal. Her childhood is pleasantly linked with the declining years of her aged and saintly grandmother, whilst her maturer years coincide with the foundation of nearly all the convents of the Visitation. Thither did the celebrated Marchioness frequently come, to seek rest and consolation far from the confusion of the world. The same may be said of the Countess de Toulongeon, the Countess de Grignan, the Countess de Rabutin, Louise-Angélique de la Fayette, of Marie de Hautefort, of the Duchess de Lesdiguières, and numbers of others who, educated at the Visitation or received among its members, owe to it, in a great measure, the culture of their intellect, their amiable gravity of character, and their faith. It is in this way that the Visitation has exercised social influence more considerable than might at first sight be imagined, and contributed its share toward the forming of the seventeenth century. It is in this way, also, that in our own troubled days it acquits itself of its obligations to the imperilled world around it. It is like the conduits which the hand of the laborer buries deep in the earth, and which, invisible and trodden under foot, do but the better fertilize the surrounding fields.

IV.

In the foregoing lines may be seen the various kinds of interest attached to the Life of St. Chantal, and the various motives that determined me to write it. But I repeat, notwithstanding the great inclination I felt for the task, I should not have undertaken it, had I not discovered the manuscripts above alluded to, and which have lain unknown to all preceding biographers of the saint. They inspired me with the idea of this work. Dissatisfied with the incomplete and often defective copies already in my possession, I undertook to search up the original manuscripts, and, the better to understand them, I visited all the places in which the saint had lived; for there are scenes that can never be well conceived save on the spot upon which they were enacted. Since childhood I had been living in the city in which St. Chantal was born, which she had embalmed with the perfume of her youth and riper years, in which she had met St. Francis de Sales, and which she had left only in stepping over the body of her son. I went to see the château of Bourbilly in which her marriage was celebrated, and which was the witness of her conjugal and maternal joys, followed soon, alas! by the deepest grief. I went next to the château of Monthelon, in which she passed the first eight years of her widowhood, and in which were so brilliantly displayed her meekness, her heroic patience, and her tender charity for the poor. Lastly, I turned to Annecy, that little town of Savoy, so celebrated for its beautiful lake, but more famous still as having been the cradle of the Visitation and the theatre of the virtues of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal.

Soon after my arrival, I hastened to the convent, to receive the most cordial hospitality in apartments assigned me in the exterior part of the building. It was no longer the same house as in St. Chantal's time, but it was the same piety, the same gracious courtesy, the same virtues. The archives were soon opened to me, and the most precious manuscripts passed to the exterior parlors in which I was domiciled. With what emotion I read one after the other

the magnificent autograph letters of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal, the former covered with erasures and references, the latter written in a firmer hand, but of antiquated orthography, nearly all of them incorrectly published, and a great number of them still unpublished. There I found the autograph manuscript of the *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, the original copy, written in a bold and beautiful hand, and without a single erasure; the *Mémoires* of Mother Françoise-Angélique de la Croix, of Sister Louise-Dorothée de Marigny, of Mother de Clermont-Mont-Saint-Jean, and of Georges de Fessigny, the senior syndic of Annecy; the history of the foundation of the Visitation in France, Savoy, and Italy, drawn up by the Sisters themselves with as much exactitude as beauty of style; and, finally, over twenty manuscript volumes containing the history of the principal foundations made by Visitandines in different parts of the world. None of these interesting chronicles, saving the *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, had ever been published.

But what even more than all these treasures excited my pious avidity were six folio volumes containing the whole process of St. Chantal's canonization, signed and paraphed by the Apostolic Notaries, bearing, consequently, the surest mark of certitude and authenticity. Peculiar circumstances enhanced their value. After the Apostolic Notaries had received all the depositions relating to the process, they impressed their seal upon the six folio volumes that contain them, and pronounced the penalty of excommunication against any one who would dare open them before the sentence of the judge, that is, before the solemn publication of the Bull of Canonization. But events, of which we shall speak later, having delayed the publication of this Bull until 1767, and the Revolution, shortly after falling like a thunderbolt upon Europe, having destroyed the convent of Annecy, these volumes had remained forgotten and unknown in the episcopal archives. His Lordship, Bishop Rendu, whose loss the diocese of Annecy is still mourning, found the seals of the Apostolic Commissaries still intact, as he himself told me. He had just decided to break them when I arrived at Annecy. No previous biographer of

St. Chantal has, therefore, made use of these valuable papers.

That nothing might escape my investigations, the Bishop of Annecy permitted me to enter the monastic precincts and visit every part of the convent.

There I saw among other inestimable relics that old *Chapter-Book*, commenced two centuries ago and not yet filled. Its first pages were written by St. Francis de Sales, and in it, in St. Chantal's own handwriting, is the account of the foundation of the convent at Annecy. It contains, also, the verbal processes of the Chapters over which she presided. These acts are signed by her. On the first page of this book St. Francis de Sales wrote the following words: "O Jesus, grant that the names inscribed on these perishable pages may be forever written in the Book of Life!" Ever since then, during more than two centuries, not only have the religious of the Visitation considered it a great privilege to be allowed to inscribe their names in it, but cardinals, bishops, kings, queens, nobles of every nation, have solicited the favor of being permitted to place their signature below those of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal. I added my humble name to the list, and begged the great saint to bless the work for which I had undertaken the pilgrimage to Annecy.

It would be difficult to enumerate the days passed in these interesting researches. Happy moments are not measured. The whole of the day and a part of the night were spent in poring over those precious papers whose every word sent a thrill through my being. What charming simplicity! What energetic, what masculine vigor fell from the pen of these saints! As I read, passage after passage was marked and copied by myself or others. The perusal of those pages enraptured me. When fatigue obliged me to lay down my pen, I went out to stroll through the town, still redolent of the perfume exhaled by the virtues of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal. Every street seemed to bear the marks of their footsteps. I visited the humble house that had served as a palace for the exiled Bishop of Geneva. I went to the church in which, in his own gentle way, he had instructed his people in the truths

of faith, and near whose door is still pointed out the spot upon which his confessional had stood, that spot once so crowded, but now forsaken.

I followed the path taken by the holy Baroness de Chantal two centuries before, when she went from the dwelling of the holy Bishop to the humble house called the *Gallery*, in which, on the following day, the Order of the Visitation took birth. I entered that house and, by the aid of the contemporary *Mémoires*, discovered the little chapel in which St. Francis de Sales gave the veil to St. Chantal and received the sacred vows of her profession. There, too, I saw the garden in which he gave the Sisters those beautiful instructions, published under the title of *Spiritual Conferences*. I sauntered through the avenue in which, walking with his holy co-operator, he drew the first outlines of the rising Institute. I saw even the iron clamps of the poor money-box, the cause of the only disobedience ever committed by St. Chantal as well as of one of the most beautiful acts of humility and repentance recorded in the annals of virtue. All is still standing as it did two centuries ago; all speaks to the heart; all breathes peace, innocence, heroism, and love.

But the place toward which I most frequently turned my steps, and in which I lingered with the greatest pleasure, was the chapel of the present convent. In it, respected by time and by revolutions, rest the bodies of the Founder and the Foundress of the Order. Never shall I forget the emotion that I experienced on my first entrance into this chapel. There, enclosed in a shrine covered with glass, that the pious curiosity of the devout pilgrim may be gratified, lay the saint upon whose life I had so long meditated. She seemed to be sleeping upon a couch of state. She was clothed in the religious dress precisely as when she went from place to place founding her convents. Her Rosary was hanging from her girdle, and her Crucifix lay on her breast, just over the spot upon which she had imprinted with a red-hot iron the sacred name of Jesus. Long and silently I gazed upon her, my eyes moist with involuntary tears, which I made no effort to check, and my heart inebriated with that celestial perfume breathed at the tomb of the saints. There all my

former irresolution vanished. Seeing in my projected work something so grand and beautiful, instruction so profound and sublime, a lesson so well suited to the wants of the age, so striking an example of mingled firmness and mildness in St. Chantal, and in her holy director such amiability founded upon such strength of soul—beholding in all those first religious grouped around their Founders something so pure and ardent, so intrepid and vigorous—in the whole plan, in fine, viewing so lovely a perspective of light and life, I was filled with admiration and, in spite of my inability, which never before appeared to me greater, I made a promise to Almighty God to put my hand to the work.

The result of my labor, my pilgrimage, and my research I now publish. I offer it to pious souls, particularly to Christian women living in the world and to virgins whom divine grace is sanctifying in the solitude of the cloister. From it the former will learn how, even with the cares and distractions of the world, with many children and a large fortune, one may become a saint upon the sole condition of being firm, generous, and devoted—in a word, of sacrificing herself to God and to her family; the latter will more highly esteem a vocation which cost Madame de Chantal so dear, so much anguish of heart; and both will learn from this illustrious servant of God what heights of spirituality are attained by souls that know how to abandon self and, as the Holy Scriptures say, give themselves up to grace.

Even worldlings themselves, should any have the courage to read the book, will not finish it, I hope, without drawing from it some profit. By comparing this beautiful life, transfigured and rendered fruitful by the spirit of generosity and fortitude, with the idle and sterile existence of the worldling, the peace of the one with the troubles of the other, and, if they will, the sacrifices of the one with the greatest pleasures of the other, they will, at least, recognize where to look for true happiness of soul, and, what is still better, they will discover in what consists its dignity, its fortitude, and its fecundity—in one word, its grandeur.

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ST. CHANTAL

AND THE

FOUNDATION OF THE VISITATION.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH OF ST. CHANTAL.—HER CHILDHOOD.—FIRST YEARS OF WOMANHOOD.

1572—1592.

"My name is Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot. I am commonly called De Chantal. I am a native of Dijon, the capital of the duchy of Burgundy, and I am fifty-five years old. I am a daughter of M. Bénigne Frémyot, second President of the Parliament of Dijon, and of Lady Marguerite de Berbisey."

It was in these words that the saint whose life I am writing declared her name and lineage, in presence of the Apostolic Commissaries, assembled at Annecy for the process of the canonization of St. Francis de Sales. We see that she was born in Dijon, a city celebrated in the Middle Ages as the birthplace of St. Bernard, and later as that of Bossuet; that she was born in 1572, since in 1627 she declared herself to be fifty-five years old; and that she belonged to one of those families of the forensic gown who formed the ornament of old French society.

The Frémyot family, although emerging from obscurity only in the early part of the fifteenth century, held considerable rank among the nobility of Burgundy.[1] But the

[1] Some historians have imagined that the Frémyot family can be traced back to the early days of Christianity in Gaul, and that some of its members were among the pagans converted and baptized by

glory of its social elevation consists in the fact that its probity ennobled it.

As early as the time of Henry III., the Frémyots, then at the pinnacle of honor, bore upon their arms the following somewhat haughty, though truthful, device: "*Sic virtus super astra vehit.*" "Thus does virtue exalt above the stars."[1]

St. Bénigne, the apostle of Burgundy. But this is one of those legends which historians should distrust, as they rest on no authority. Of this one in particular, it is easy to indicate the origin. Mother de Chaugy, the first biographer of St. Chantal, writing in 1642, speaks in the following terms of the saint's family and birthplace: "The paternal ancestors of this blessed Mother were among the first founders of the august Parliament of Dijon, a very ancient city, the capital of Burgundy, and one of the first enlightened by the sacred rays of Catholic faith by the glorious St. Bénigne." (*Mémoires*, p. 1.) The sentence is clear. There is no room for doubt as to its real meaning, and yet Bishop de Maupas, to whom the manuscript *Mémoires* were intrusted, copies it in the following ambiguous manner: "St. Chantal sprang from the most noble race of the Frémyots, the descendants of the best and oldest families of Burgundy, having been the first founders of the illustrious Parliament of Dijon, the capital city of the province, and among the first enlightened by the sacred rays of the Catholic faith by the glorious St. Bénigne." (*Vie de la Vénérable Mère de Chantal*, by M. de Maupas, p. 3.) The sentence no longer presents the same clearness. Who was enlightened by the sacred rays of the Catholic faith? Was it the most noble race of the Frémyots, or was it the city of Dijon? With a little attention it can be decided, but the reader might be misled. A canon of Autun, named Lévesque, goes completely astray in his panegyric of the Countess de Toulongeon, preached in 1687. He says: "The Frémyot family does not possess so great worldly renown as many other families enjoy, but it can boast of a glorious and eminent distinction. It is the first Christian family of its province. They were the first baptized by the hand of St. Bénigne, one of the first apostles of Burgundy." (*Oraison funèbre de Madame de Toulongeon*, by M. Lévesque, Canon of Notre-Dame d'Autun.) Thus do historical errors arise, and they are repeated without investigation by all succeeding writers.

[1] *Le Parlement de Bourgogne*, by P. Paillot (Dijon, 1649, 1 vol. folio, p. 86), gives the following description of the arms of President Frémyot: "The arms of President Frémyot were azure with three silver martlets, two at the chief and one at the point of the shield, with a golden star over each. Over the two upper stars was a stripe of gules, and to the chief of the escutcheon was attached a silver label. The crest was a sable rook: the device, '*Sic virtus super astra vehit*.'"

René Frémyot, auditor of the Exchequer at Dijon in 1518, and great-grandfather of our saint, is the first member of the family of whom we possess any particulars. "He was a model of righteousness and every kind of virtue, the father of the poor and the refuge of the afflicted."[1] His son, Jean Frémyot, held a seat in Parliament and added to his title of Councillor that of Lord of Thotes and Joint Lord of Barrain. Fortune was beginning to smile upon them, but neither faith nor energy was on the wane. Twice every day, morning and evening without fail, he used to give a little discourse to his children and servants, as an antidote and preservative against the errors of Luther and Calvin. Not satisfied with that, he would, even when in company, gather around him a circle of friends, and speak to them with admirable zeal and fervor of the truths of the Roman Catholic Church.[2] This gives us an idea of the blood that was afterward to flow in St. Chantal's veins.

Jean Frémyot married Guillemette Godran, by whom he had four sons and one daughter. The eldest son, Claude Frémyot, Lord of Is-sur-Tille and Royal Councillor, was for many years President of the Court of Exchequer. This good and simple-hearted man will be mentioned several times in the course of this work. The mansion he occupied in Dijon is still standing. Catholics visit it with respect, regarding it as a kind of relic linked with the memory of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal, who often met there.[3] The second

[1] Mother de Chaugy's *Mémoires sur la Vie et les Vertus de Sainte Jeanne-Françoise de Chantal*, published by Abbé Languer, 2d ed., Paris, 1845, p. 1. This edition is the one always quoted in the present work.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 1. There is some inaccuracy in the interesting *Mémoires* from which we shall copiously draw. Mother de Chaugy confounds names. St. Chantal's grandfather was called Jean and not René. The latter did not hold the highest positions in Parliament. He was merely the auditor of accounts. What she says about the paternal ancestors of St. Chantal being the first founders of the Parliament of Dijon is also an error. There is no Frémyot on the list of magistrates named by Louis XI. at the establishment of the Parliament of Burgundy. But we find mention made of a Berbisey, one of the maternal ancestors of the saint. Thence arose the error of Mother de Chaugy, copied by Bishop de Maupas.

[3] This mansion is situated in Rue Jeannin, No. 1. It has been

son, André Frémyot, Councillor of the Parliament, died young. His name will not occur again in these pages. The third son, Bénigne Frémyot, was the father of our saint. Successively Attorney-General, Royal Councillor, President of the Burgundian Parliament, and Mayor of Dijon, he eclipsed all his ancestors, not only by his extraordinary magnanimity of soul, but by the important part he played in the political events of his day. The fourth son, Jean Frémyot, consecrated his life to the service of God, first at the Abbey of St. Bénigne, in Dijon, and later as Prior of the Benedictine monastery of Val-de-Choux, near Châtillon-sur-Seine. The daughter, Michelle Frémyot, married Jean le Compasseur, President of the Exchequer. She died young and childless.[1]

The Berbisey family was older and not less distinguished than the Frémyots. There are Berbiseys on the list of magistrates named by Louis XI. when he established the Parliament of Burgundy. From that period this family, whose members intermarried with illustrious houses, continued to give Mayors to the city of Dijon, Councillors to the Parliament of Burgundy, Bishops and Abbots to the Church. But what added most to the lustre of this distinguished family, was the fact that the blood of St. Bernard flowed in its veins. In 1378 the two families were united by the marriage of Perrenot de Berbisey with Oudette de Normand, who belonged to the illustrious house of the holy Abbot of Clairvaux.[2]

If we insist upon these facts, it is not, according to the

erroneously supposed that St. Chantal was born there. See Note II., end of volume.

[1] See, end of volume, the genealogical table of the Frémyot family (Note I.). See also, in the general archives of the Côte-d'Or department, a notice, unfortunately not very exact, about this same family. (*Armorial de la Chambre des Comptes*, p. 56.)

[2] See the *Oraison funèbre de Madame de Toulongeon*, mentioned before. When he published his discourse, the author added some vouchers of the facts stated in it, thereby greatly increasing the excellence of the pamphlet. Among these vouchers is a Latin memorial of Jean de Marigny, Abbot of St. Étienne, in Dijon, dated May 6, 1378, which proves this union of the Berbisey family with that of St. Bernard.

judicious remark of one of the first biographers of our saint, with a view "to boast of things in which the world glories; but we do it because it seems reasonable to examine the radical qualities of the tree whose delicious fruit we are going to taste."[1]

In 1572, the period at which this history begins, M. Bénigne Frémyot and Marguerite de Berbisey had been married two years,[2] and were dwelling in Dijon, in a mansion which has since disappeared and of which even the locality is uncertain.[3] It was here that our saint was born, on Tuesday, January 23, 1572, between seven and eight in the morning. Her father's lively faith urged him to have her carried at once to the church, to be baptized without delay; and as it was the feast of St. John the Almoner, the name of Jeanne was given her, in accordance with one of those pious customs of the Middle Ages, so beautiful and, at the same time, so significant.[4] He had an elder daughter named Marguerite, who later on married the Baron des Francs. His youngest child André became Archbishop of Bourges and one of the dearest friends of St. Francis de Sales.

Jeanne, as we shall call her, knew her mother only at an age in which the heart is incapable of retaining the remembrance of its loves. Madame Frémyot died in the flower of

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 1.

[2] *Armorial de la Chambre des Comptes*, p. 55. "Bénigne had married, in 1570, Marguerite de Berbisey, daughter of Claude, Master-Councillor in the Court of Exchequer." This is the only place in which we have found the date of President Frémyot's marriage.

[3] See Note II., at the end of volume.

[4] The certificate of St. Chantal's Baptism has disappeared and every endeavor to find it has proved unsuccessful. As far back as 1722, this important paper was missing. The Apostolic Commissaries, appointed for the process of her canonization, not being able to find it, directed special inquiry to be made upon the question of St. Chantal's Baptism; and "*in order to supply for the certificate of Baptism, which*," as they said, "*cannot be found*," they required a written attestation from the Bishop of Langres, dated February 12, 1710. In it the Bishop declared that the inhabitants of the city of Dijon professed the Catholic faith and *that all the children born there were baptized.* They, moreover, received the testimony of a great number of witnesses on this point. (*Procès de Béatification*, 3 vols. folio, p. 674.)

youth, giving birth to André, her third child. She was deeply regretted, particularly by the poor, who, weeping and calling her their benefactress, followed her to her last resting-place.[1] Jeanne was then eighteen months old. Generally speaking, there is something wanting to those children who have not grown up at their mother's knee. They are plants that have had no sun. But God, who had destined the child for so glorious a career, seems to have designedly withdrawn from her the caresses of a mother, that there might be no tinge of effeminacy in her education; and in President Frémyot He had prepared for her a preceptor capable of initiating her into that life of faith, of generosity, and of sacrifice, of which she was to present to the seventeenth century so beautiful an example.

President Frémyot possessed in a high degree the qualities requisite for so delicate a mission. In Parliament he was admired for his good sense, the rectitude of his decisions, the promptitude and energy of his action.[2] But his faith, devotedness to the Church, and inflexible uprightness of conscience far outshone his parliamentary virtues. He was one of those men in whom the sentiment of duty rules every other consideration, who think there should be not a moment's hesitation in obeying its call, although they might lose thereby a thousand lives, and who, thus elevated above self by the firmness of their principles, need but the opportunity to become heroes. This opportunity was not wanting in the eventful life of the President. On more than one occasion he acted the hero's part so simply and so naturally as to seem totally unconscious of it.

In the arms and from the lips of this excellent man, Jeanne early imbibed that masculine energy, good sense, and firmness which formed the most salient points of her character. Faith cast deep roots into her young soul and

[1] Deposition of Sister Françoise-Bénigne Dorlier.

[2] His contemporaries tell us that he was appointed Attorney-General at the age of twenty-two. During the long years he held the office, his decisions were always accepted by the court, "a circumstance not common," observes Paillot, "but which was publicly asserted at his funeral, in presence of the Parliament." (*Le Parlement de Bourgogne*, p. 86.)

enlightened her understanding at an age in which reason generally lies dormant. When still quite small, nay, scarcely more than a babe at the breast, the very sight of a heretic would make her weep bitterly. If one of them attempted to caress her, as is common with children, she would hide her head in her nurse's bosom and begin to cry; only the departure of the obnoxious visitor could pacify her.[1]

One day, when scarcely five years old, she was playing in her father's study, whilst an animated discussion was going on between President Frémyot and a Protestant nobleman who had come to visit him. The Blessed Eucharist formed the subject of controversy. The Protestant remarked that what pleased him most in the reformed religion was the denial of the real presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. At these words the holy child could no longer restrain herself. She stepped quickly toward the nobleman, and, looking at him indignantly, said :

"My Lord, you *must* believe that Jesus Christ is in the Blessed Sacrament, because He has said it. If you do not believe, you make Him a liar."

Her tone astonished the visitor, and he commenced to dispute the question with her; but she disconcerted him by the wisdom of her answers, and excited the admiration of all present by the ardor of her faith. Embarrassed by her ready replies, and wishing to put an end to the discussion, as one usually does with children, the nobleman offered her some sugar-plums. Jeanne took them in her apron and, without touching one of them, ran to the fire and threw them in, saying :

"See, my Lord, how heretics will burn in the fire of hell, because they do not believe what Jesus Christ has said."

Another day this same nobleman was again discussing the reformed religion in President Frémyot's parlor, when the holy child approached him, and said :

"My Lord, if you had given the lie to the king, my papa would have you hanged. Now, you have given the lie, over

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 303.

and again, to Our Saviour, and," she added, pointing to a large picture of St. Peter and St. Paul, "those two Presidents will have you hanged."

Such instances were of frequent occurrence. President Frémyot, delighted with her happy inclinations, left nothing undone to develop them. Tutors of his own choice were employed to impart to his three children the solid and brilliant education required by their position in society and the customs of the times. Jeanne "learned with great facility and readiness of wit; and she was taught all that was suitable for a young lady of her condition and excellent mind; namely, to read, write, dance, play upon musical instruments, sing by note, embroider, etc." [1] She succeeded in all. To none of her studies, however, did she apply more earnestly and attentively than to the religious instructions which President Frémyot himself gave. Morning and evening, in accordance with the traditions of his family, he gathered around him his three children and, with the heart of a father and a Christian, taught them to know and love the beauty of the Catholic faith, then so disfigured by heresy. He used to insist particularly upon a firm attachment to the holy Roman Church, and to the common Father of the Faithful, so much the more worthy of love and veneration at that period as his sacred character was the more despised and insulted.[2] The soul of the holy child eagerly drank in his sacred lessons; and young as she was, joy or indignation thrilled her little frame as her father related the triumphs or the troubles of the Church.

She also manifested, in her tenderest infancy, that great compassion for the poor which later wrought so many prodigies.[3] The sight of the unfortunate would draw tears to her eyes. If she met a poor creature in rags, it seemed to her that she saw Jesus Christ wandering about, without a stone whereon to lay His head. She used to say with great simplicity:

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 5.

[2] Deposition of Sister Paul-Hiéronyme de Monthouz. "The deponent declares that she knows this from having heard it from the lips of the Countess de Toulongeon, Mother de Chantal's daughter."

[3] Deposition of Mother Favre de Charmette.

"If I did not love the poor, it seems to me that I should no longer love God."

A tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin crowned these dawning virtues. As soon as she had attained the age of reason and could feel the loss of her mother, she turned toward Mary, begging to be received as her child. From that moment Jeanne delighted in calling herself the Blessed Virgin's child, consulted her as children are wont to consult their mother, and sought her assistance in every danger and in all her little undertakings.[1] We shall soon see that, among other favors, she owed to our Blessed Lady her preservation in the midst of the dangerous seductions to which she was afterward exposed.

No details have reached us of her First Communion, which in those days was not attended by the public solemnity that now surrounds it; nor do we know aught of her Confirmation.[2] We know, however, that she then added Françoise to her baptismal name. In the process for her beatification, several of the witnesses testified that it was on the day of her Confirmation she first felt the desire, which never afterward left her, to do great things for God, and even to suffer martyrdom.[3]

It was only a short time after this period, when Jeanne-Françoise was entering her girlhood, that an event occurred which greatly matured her mind and turned her heart to God. Her grandfather, M. Jean Frémyot, was still alive and over seventy-five years old. After having been for a long time one of the luminaries of the Burgundian Parliament, and whilst still in the full enjoyment of his physical and mental faculties, he retired from the world and employed the rest of his admirable life in preparing for the dawn of eternal day. His was that beautiful and vigorous old age with which God often rewards virtue. One morning he

[1] *Procès de Béatification*, vol. i. p. 59. All the witnesses insist upon this devotion to the Blessed Virgin, which was always one of the most salient features in the piety of our saint.

[2] The witnesses merely say that she was confirmed at the proper time, "*in ætate legitima.*" Several declare that they know neither in which year nor in which church she received this sacrament.

[3] Deposition of Sisters Marie-Valentine de Bellair and Rosalie Greyffié.

assembled his children and grandchildren and, although apparently in his usual health, announced to them that God had revealed to him the hour of his death, and that he would die on the following day. "Then he mounted his mule and went to bid his friends and relatives good-bye, telling them with holy simplicity that he was about to start on his journey to eternity."

"On his return home, the pious and venerable old man," continue the *Mémoires*, "gave directions for Holy Mass to be said the next morning in a small chapel near his own room, that he might hear it from his bed, and confidently declared that before the priest should have taken the last ablution his soul would be in eternity. The night was passed very devoutly, although in suffering. When morning came, he confessed, communicated, and received the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. He then begged that Mass might be begun, adding these beautiful words: 'Before the last ablution shall have been taken, I shall go to drink the eternal nectar in the kingdom of my God.' He heard Mass with great fervor. When the priest elevated the chalice, the holy old man raised his eyes toward the eternal hills and, his countenance beaming with angelic ardor, repeated in Latin the following verse of the Psalms: *Quando consolaberis me?*—'When, O Lord, wilt Thou console me?' and expired."[1]

A death almost miraculous, and serene as that of the saints, was calculated to produce a deep impression upon Jeanne-Françoise. She daily witnessed in the active life of her father that virtue exacts sacrifice, and in the death of her grandfather she beheld its recompense. These two lessons, so mercifully vouchsafed her by Divine Providence at the very dawn of womanhood, fully developed the grave turn of mind and zealous faith that characterized her childhood's years.

Meanwhile Marguerite Frémyot, our saint's elder sister, had been sought in marriage by Jean-Jacques de Neufchèzes, Baron des Francs, one of the first noblemen of Poitou. It was a grand alliance. The father of M. de Neufchèzes was

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 2.

nephew of the illustrious Gaspard de Tavannes, whose writings he collected, and whose *Mémoires* he published in the year 1574. His eldest brother was High-Admiral of France and played an important part in the government during Louis XIV.'s minority, under the regency of Anne of Austria. This proposal of marriage was joyfully welcomed by President Frémyot for two reasons. The first was, that it would strengthen the ties already uniting him with his illustrious friend, the Count de Tavannes; the second, that it would give him an opportunity to remove his children from Burgundy and send them to Poitou. The political horizon was beginning to grow dark. Since the death of the Duke of Alençon, brother of Henry III., but particularly since the sad peace of Nemours, which had been extorted from the weakness of the king, minds in Burgundy were in a state of agitation, and there was every indication of civil war.

Immediately after the celebration of the marriage, therefore, and about the year 1587,[1] President Frémyot confided Jeanne-Françoise to M. de Neufchèzes, and sent her to Poitou with her sister. His son André he kept at home.

The journey undertaken by our saint was at that period anything but cheering for a Catholic. Once across the Loire, the ravages of Protestantism everywhere met the eye. The Huguenots had covered with ruins the provinces of Anjou, Poitou, and Touraine, of which they had long been masters. Nearly all the churches had been destroyed or desecrated, their steeples shattered by cannon-balls, their portals riddled with shot, their statues mutilated, their reliquaries melted down, and the relics themselves cast to the winds.[2] At every step, Jeanne-Françoise was over-

[1] *Procès de Béatification:* Deposition of Sister Marie-Aimée de Sonnaz. "The said deponent adding that she (St. Chantal), being about fifteen years old, afterward accompanied the Baroness des Francs, her sister, to Poitou." Several other witnesses give the same testimony, which is very important, as it fixes the date of this journey and proves that St. Chantal was not in Burgundy during the war. On account of the little care taken to determine dates, there is much confusion and many irreconcilable statements in the account hitherto given by biographers of our saint concerning this period of her life.

[2] Don Vaissette: *Histoire du Languedoc, année 1560 à 1570.* Sismondi: *Histoire des Français,* vol. xviii. pp. 266–306. See also the

whelmed with grief. "I was so grieved to see the churches in so pitiful a state," she used to say later, "that I could not repress my tears."[1] In her walks about the environs of Poitiers, where the ravages of the Huguenots had exceeded all bounds, tears would start to her eyes when she passed by a half-burned chapel, or saw the fragments of a cross or a statue hidden under the grass. Her emotion was of so frequent recurrence that she, at last, resolved to keep her veil lowered, that her tears might not be noticed. She feared that the world, incapable of such feelings, would imagine her unhappy in her sister's family. All her life she preserved a painful remembrance of these sad scenes; and, in advanced years, her heart used to sink within her, as before in Poitou, whenever she heard the beautiful *Lamentations* of Jeremias: "The ways of Sion mourn, because there are none that come to the solemn feast: all her gates are broken down: her priests sigh: her virgins are in affliction, and she is oppressed with bitterness" (Lam. i. 4). She had these words put into verse. "Oh!" she used to say, "if I had had this hymn when I was young, I should have sung it every day." Such was the soul of St. Chantal at the age of sixteen. If to this exquisite sensibility we add that firmness of character and ardent faith alluded to above, we shall be able to form some idea of the beautiful portrait our saint will present when these admirable germs shall have borne fruit.

Jeanne-Françoise and her sister did not leave Burgundy any too soon. As President Frémyot had foreseen, the flames of civil dissension were about to burst forth. Whilst awaiting the hour of justice and recompense, which never fails to sound for those who courageously perform their duty, the President was to encounter the greatest dangers.

One vital question was then absorbing the public attention and awakening intense interest. Henry III., who in 1575 had succeeded his brother Charles IX., had no children.

engravings of the latter part of the sixteenth century. The churches are represented half demolished, the steeples pulled down, the statues broken, etc.

[1] Depositions of Mother Favre de Charmette and Sister Marie-Aimée de Sonnaz, *super art.* xiii.

His nearest relative and the heir-presumptive to the crown, Henry de Béarn, belonged to the reformed religion. What would become of France, the most Catholic kingdom, when Henry III. should be laid in the royal vaults of St. Denis? Could the throne of Clovis, of Charlemagne, and of St. Louis be occupied by a Huguenot? Such thoughts as these gave birth to the League. Blessed at its beginning by Pope Gregory XIII., approved by Henry III., who himself headed it, propagated by the clergy, applauded by the people, the League was, at its outset and in the motives that inspired it, one of the most beautiful acts of faith ever made by a Catholic people. But however holy and sacred may be the cause, it is difficult for its defenders to rise entirely above passion. Either through the ambition of some or the indifference and incapacity of others, a misunderstanding arose between the King and the League; and, by one of those contradictions in which history abounds, the sword unsheathed to prevent the accession of a Protestant was wielded to dethrone a Catholic.

In the eyes of President Frémyot, this was an outrage that nothing, not even the crimes with which Henry III. was justly reproached, could justify or exonerate. Vainly did almost the entire Parliament adhere to the League; vainly did its most distinguished members, the First President Bruslard, President Jeannin, and the Lords de Montholon and Barres, all relations or friends of President Frémyot, head the movement; nothing could cause this noble-minded magistrate to swerve from what he deemed the inflexible line of duty. When the Parliament ceased to promulgate its Decrees in the name of the King, it was nothing more to him than an assembly of rebels. Consequently, he resigned his seat and, leaving Dijon, withdrew to the country.

The fury of the populace was at once unchained. Threats against the President resounded through the city. His house was pillaged, his relatives insulted, and his son imprisoned in the citadel of Dijon.

Such proceedings neither intimidated nor disheartened President Frémyot. After conferring with Count de Tavannes, son of the illustrious Marshal of that name, by a successful stratagem he seized Flavigny, a small but tenable

place in Burgundy, built on the summit of a mountain. Thither he convoked all those members of the Parliament who viewed the political situation as he did and who had like him left Dijon. In a solemn session, he declared in the name of Henry III., whose orders he had taken, that the Parliament of Burgundy was transferred from Dijon to Flavigny.

It was a bold stroke, and it is not difficult to imagine the anger that hailed the news in Dijon. The magistrates who adhered to the League reversed and annulled in advance all the acts of the Parliament of Flavigny, and confiscated the property of its members. Moreover, as President Frémyot was the soul of the assembly, after having in vain attempted to win him over by the most magnificent offers, they had recourse to one of those atrocious means which no war could justify, and which brands with an indelible stain those that were base enough to employ it. M. Claude Frémyot, the President's brother, was sent to Flavigny with an order to his brother to dissolve immediately the royalist Parliament; which failing to do, his son would be put to death and the boy's head sent to him in a sack.

There are men who never appear greater than in moments of deepest trouble. President Frémyot crushed his enemies by the sublimity of his courage. "Better far that the child should die innocent than that the father should live guilty," he exclaimed, on hearing the terrible message. Then he embraced his brother, bade him be of good heart, and gave him a letter for the Chevalier de Fervaque, governor of the province. This letter has too long lain hidden in the municipal archives of Dijon. It echoes the heart's pulsations of a magnanimous citizen purified by Christianity, pulsations as strong as those that swelled the breast of the old Roman senators, but which proceeded from wiser and truer principles. The following is a copy of it:

"My Lord:

"I am infinitely obliged to you, and to all the gentlemen of the city, for your courtesy in allowing my brother to visit me. My indebtedness arises not only from the gratification which this visit affords me of consoling him and of being

consoled by him in our public and private misfortunes, but also from the proof it offers that you still entertain the opinion that I love my country and my fellow-citizens as becomes an upright man. Would to God I could offer my life in sacrifice for the public good, and thus restore harmony among the people!

"I wish I could have yielded to the tears and entreaties of my brother. They moved me deeply, particularly after having listened to the vexatious and unkind treatment which he and my son have received on my account and with which my relatives are still threatened. But honor and duty prevent my allowing such considerations to influence me.

"I, therefore, most humbly beg you, my Lord, to consider my past actions. I am sure that, notwithstanding the apparent cause for censure, whoever examines the case impartially will, on the contrary, praise my desire to see the whole province at peace, and my patience in the midst of threats and evil designs against me.

"Seeing myself reduced to the necessity of remaining in this province, since the King had commanded me to do so (and, besides, what had I done to deserve banishment?), and having my ears constantly assailed with rumors that such and such persons had been commissioned to kill me, it is true that I at last determined to seek a safer dwelling than my country-house. On last Tuesday, therefore, I retired to this town.

"If it be a crime to be a servant of the King and to withdraw to a town subject to His Majesty, I have sinned. If it be a crime for an honest man, pursued by enemies who unjustly wish to take away his life, to withdraw and seek a place of safety, then am I guilty. But, my Lord, you are too wise to look upon such things as crimes.

"And even if in all this I should have offended, I should still be amazed at their pursuing with vengeance my son, my brothers, sisters, and near relatives, all of whom are innocent, and from whom I have not heard for two whole months.

"And now my brother informs me of the threat that my son's head will be sent me in a sack, and that my kinsmen will be treated with the utmost rigor.

"I know well, my Lord, that so cruel and barbarous a resolution could find no entrance into a heart generous as yours. It is the result, I am sure, of the advice of infuriated enemies, who seek to gratify their hatred at the expense of the fair and glorious fame you have acquired by heroic actions and the discharge of many honorable employments. This, my Lord, inspires me with the hope that you will never yield to a suggestion so horrible and inhuman.

"But, should your virtue and high principles be overruled by the violence of my enemies, I am not so great an alien to human feeling or so void of paternal love as to remain unmoved by such a spectacle. Nevertheless, young and innocent as he is, I unhesitatingly say that I would esteem my son most happy to die for the public good. He would thus, owing to the misfortune rather than to the guilt of his father, only anticipate the natural term of his life, and be spared the bitter experience of calamities now hanging over his unhappy country.

"I beg you, then, my Lord, to season the bad counsel you have received with the salt of your own prudence. Believe me, no torments, whether inflicted upon myself or upon my son, whose sufferings I should feel more than my own, shall ever seduce me into doing anything against my honor and the duty of an honest man. I would rather die with my reputation unsullied than live for years destitute of a good name. Could I without blame have yielded to the proposals presented by my brother, I should have done so readily.

"I most humbly beg you to take what I have written in good part, and believe that no one in the world desires the peace and welfare of our country more earnestly than I, or is more willing to serve it when an opportunity presents itself.

"I pray God to preserve you, my Lord, in health, and to grant you a long and happy life.

"Your very humble and obedient servant,

"Frémyot.

"Flavigny, *Sunday, March* 5, 1589."[1]

[1] Archives of the city of Dijon. *Correspondance municipale, B.*

Such language bespeaks the hero. Even the most violent of the Leaguers were moved by it, and dared not execute their threat. They detained André in prison, however, with the sword hanging over his head, in the hope that love or fear would render President Frémyot less bold.

Whilst matters were thus pending, terrible news resounded through France. Henry III. was stabbed on the 2d of August, 1589, and the ancient race of Valois became extinct. The throne of St. Louis now belonged to a Protestant, and that thought overwhelmed Catholic France with affliction. "Instead of the acclamations and cries of 'Long live the King!' usual on such occasions, men slouched their hats or threw them on the ground, clenched their fists or grasped the hand of a comrade in token of fraternity. Thus did they express their unwillingness to accept a Huguenot king. They made vows and registered oaths whose refrain was: 'Rather a thousand deaths!'"[1] President Frémyot felt the blow more deeply than his neighbors. "In one night his hair on the side upon which he had lain turned white as snow."[2] It was, in truth, a serious moment for him. How should he act? Henry IV. was a lineal descendant of St. Louis and the legitimate heir of the throne; would it be lawful to abandon him? On the other side, Henry IV. was a heretic; would it be lawful to obey him? During the entire night, President Frémyot weighed these questions. He arose next morning after those long hours of agitation and sleeplessness prematurely gray, but with one of those sublime resolutions sufficient to immortalize a life. Henry IV. was a son of St. Louis, and the throne belonged to him; and so the courageous President raised his flag upon the towers of Flavigny. But Henry IV. was a Protestant, and as such he could never reign over the French; therefore,

22. Registre X. No. 132. The above was already written when, on reading *Histoire du Parlement de Bourgogne*, just published by M. de Lacuisine, we found in it this letter accompanied by remarks which show that its contents were worthily appreciated. (*Le Parlement de Bourgogne depuis son Origine jusqu'à sa Chute*, by M. de Lacuisine, President of the Imperial Court of Dijon, 2 vols. 8vo, Dijon, 1857; vol. ii. p. 26.)

[1] *Histoire Universelle* of D'Aubigné, vol. iii. liv. ii. chap. xxii.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 7.

President Frémyot determined to fall under the battered gates of Flavigny rather than suffer the King to enter before having abjured heresy. "Sire," he afterward said to Henry the Great, "I confess that, if Your Majesty had not cried, 'Long live the Roman Church!' I should never have cried, 'Long live Henry IV.!'"

His resolution taken, the President immediately set out to join Count de Tavannes, who, at the head of his troops, was besieging the citadel of Duesmes. He announced to them the death of Henry III. and made them swear loyalty to the new King, Henry IV., "on condition that he would become a Catholic." As he was drawing up, near the wall of the citadel, the act of submission for the army, a musket-ball cleft the drum on which he was writing. Not a tremor shook his hand. He called for another drum, and continued his writing.

Four or five years passed before Henry IV.'s triumph was complete. During this period, President Frémyot expended his fortune, alienated his property, and exposed his life, "telling those who served under him that the wealth of a politician and of a warrior consists in the glory of having impoverished himself to preserve intact the fidelity sworn to his God and his King."[1]

To conclude this imperfect sketch of so noble a character, let us add that the hour of triumph found President Frémyot still greater than the moment of danger. His very enemies were compelled to admire his modesty and disinterestedness. Surprised at the praises lavished on him; not tempted by the highest charges; refusing the position of First President in the Parliament of Burgundy; even resisting Henry IV., who wished to take him to Paris, he was as inflexible in his modesty as he had been in his fidelity. Having reached the pinnacle of honor, this great and upright man sighed but for solitude, the forgetfulness of the world, and quiet intercourse with God. He wished to become a priest, thus to consecrate his old age to the service of mankind. This was his only dream, his only ambition.[2]

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 6.

[2] Nearly all these facts are attested by the witnesses who appeared

Whilst President Frémyot was presenting to the Burgundians so grand an example, his daughter Jeanne-Françoise was passing through as great dangers in the province of Poitou. Although of a different nature, her peril was not less calculated to prove her virtue. The Baron des Francs and his young wife had been welcomed home with brilliant festivities, shared by all the nobility of the neighborhood. Jeanne was then only sixteen years old, her beauty radiant with the freshness of youth. She was at once sought after and flattered. Reared in the austere school of her father, never before had she heard the seductive language of the world, so enticing to the uninitiated ear.

The danger was increased by the character of the frivolous woman given to her as an attendant. Dress, parties, balls, were the daily subject of her conversation with Jeanne-Françoise, to whom she revealed the thousand secrets of the art of pleasing, which she herself had too often practised. She "neglected no artifice to blight the beauty of this expanding flower."[1] She tried to induce her young companion to adorn herself with those paints, those jewels and perfumed tissues, which Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian forbade the first Christians. "She even sought to initiate her into still more pernicious practices; for she was suspected, and not rashly, of dealing in magic. She used to tell Jeanne-Françoise that, if she would hearken to her, she should marry one of the most distinguished lords of Poitou."

The innocent girl listened without comprehending, and experienced for this woman an instinctive and unaccountable repugnance. She wished even to get rid of her, but her efforts to have her dismissed were unavailing. The old woman's cunning in maintaining her position was greater than the young girl's power to have her expelled. Obliged to submit to these frivolous conversations, and repeatedly exposed to the snares of vanity, Jeanne-Françoise sought

at the process of the canonization of St. Chantal. Several of the deponents had learned them from the mouths of the old religious to whom the saint herself had related them. She liked to talk about her father and his noble deeds; but it was that she might humble herself at being so unworthy a daughter of such a parent.

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 10.

help from God. She took refuge at the altar of Mary, whom she called her mother. She meditated upon the hidden life led by the Blessed Virgin at Nazareth, and in the contemplation of those beautiful scenes of domestic sanctity she imbibed a spirit of peace and happiness that rendered her insensible to every seduction. Long and frequent were the hours thus spent.

Jeanne-Françoise had another safeguard against the allurements of the world, namely, her rare modesty. She attracted and restrained. The natural dignity of her manners, the precocious maturity of her mind, the gravity and reserve that breathed even in her smile and rendered her ingenuousness still more charming—in short, her whole demeanor, protected her youth and beauty, and exacted respect of all who approached her. She followed the fashions of her time only so far as was necessary in order not to excite ridicule. This may be seen from the portrait at the beginning of this volume. It represents Jeanne-Françoise at the age of twenty.

When we recall how great was the passion for dress in the sixteenth century; when we glance at the portraits of that period and see the embroidery, the chains, the pearls, the precious stones, the rows of gold buttons, the bright colors and magnificent materials permitted noble ladies by the laws of those days, we cannot repress a feeling of admiration at the modest simplicity displayed in the costume of our young saint, particularly when we are told that the indulgent liberality of the secular powers did not suffice to satisfy the luxurious tastes of the age.[1] In the picture

[1] See the Decree issued by Henry III., enforcing a reformation in the style of dress (March 24, 1583). Among other things, it says: "The wives and daughters of Presidents may wear embroidered hoods and head-dresses, a head-band and collar ornamented with pearls and jewels, a ring and some amulets, likewise set with precious stones, and they may be enamelled with gold. They may wear, also, chains, bracelets, clasps, and gold buttons down the front of their gowns and cloaks; but on the lappets of their sleeves there is to be only one row of buttons, without lace, enamel, pearls, or precious stones. Their watches, however, which are to hang in front, may be cased in gold, enamelled or not, but with only five jewels in them." (*Recueil général des Anciennes Lois Françaises*, by M. Isambert. Paris, 1829, vols. xii.,

alluded to, Jeanne-Françoise wears a dark dress, with a wimple high in the neck, a very remarkable feature in dress at a period in which indecent fashions were misleading every one, and such liberties were taken as to necessitate special laws for the protection of modesty.[1] Her sleeves are large, but far from the ridiculous dimensions that justly roused the zeal of the preachers of the day.[2] She wears no pearls, although greatly in vogue at the time, either around her neck, in her hair, or on her dress. On her head is a small velvet cap, instead of the jewels against which the law had vainly pronounced its anathema, and which seemed almost indispensable to a lady of rank. Let us notice one more feature in the picture. Our lovely saint is on her knees, her hands joined, her eyes slightly raised toward heaven, as if in prayer. What posture could better portray her piety and modesty?

Although men may be so unfortunate as not to practise virtue, they cannot help appreciating it in others; hence the numerous suitors that gathered around Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot. The first families of Poitou eagerly sought an alliance with her, and her hand soon became a coveted prize.

The suit of one of these gentlemen revealed the staunch faith of the young saint. The nobleman in question was a frequent visitor at the house of the Baron des Francs. His rank and fine appearance distinguished him among her

xiii., xiv. See Decrees of Francis I., Charles IX., Henry II., and Henry III., for the curtailing of luxury in dress.)

[1] In the statement of the motives that induced Henry III. to pass a Decree for reformation in the luxurious tastes of the day, we read as follows: "God is greatly offended, and modesty has almost entirely disappeared."

[2] See the sermons of Menot, a celebrated preacher of the sixteenth century. In his constant invectives against luxurious dressing, he never forgot the wide sleeves, covered with jewels and buttoned with pearls, etc. (*Sermones Menoti*, Paris.) The sermons of Guillaume Pepin were in the same style. He used sharply to attack "noble ladies, the sleeves and trains of whose dresses are so long that the price paid for them would have supported a whole family, and who, when the fashion changes, think they are doing great things for God by presenting these soiled garments to the altar." (*Sermones Guillelmi Pepini*, 8vo, Paris, 1536.)

many suitors; and he was, moreover, an intimate friend of Jeanne's brother-in-law. Being of the reformed religion and convinced that the hand of so virtuous a maiden would be given only to a Catholic, he feigned sentiments altogether foreign to those of his heart. The Baron des Francs was either deceived by the fraud or he gave a tacit consent to it. He may have been actuated by the desire to keep his sister-in-law near him, or by the hope that "the believing wife would convert the unbelieving husband." But no efforts could induce Jeanne-Françoise to consent to the marriage. One day when more closely pressed than usual, she said: "I would rather choose imprisonment for life than share the home of a Huguenot. I would rather die a thousand deaths, one after the other, than see myself united in marriage to an enemy of the Church." These words were further evidence of that Christian firmness of which she had already given so many proofs. All were surprised at her words, for the young nobleman, concealing his real sentiments, passed for a good Catholic. It was not long, however, before Jeanne's friends were undeceived. When there was no longer hope of obtaining Mademoiselle Frémyot's hand, he threw off the mask and showed himself what he had always been, a most obstinate heretic. It then became evident that the young saint had been divinely enlightened.

Several witnesses in the process of her beatification affirmed that she retained all her life a deep feeling of gratitude for this favor. She often spoke of it as of one of the greatest graces she had ever received, and attributed it to the protection of the Blessed Virgin, who had deigned to act a mother's part toward her in this trying circumstance. She used also to say that the happy marriage with which she was afterward blessed was a recompense of her fidelity to grace in refusing the hand of a heretic.

Shortly after, another suitor presented himself, and Baron des Francs was again dazzled by appearances. The young gentleman bore a great name, and introduced himself as the scion of an old and illustrious house. He proclaimed himself an orphan, and so artfully told his tale that all were completely deceived, and began to congratulate Mademoiselle Frémyot. But she was not affected by the general opinion.

Her penetration, or rather that divine light, the portion of simple, God-serving souls, revealed to her certain disagreeable traits in the young man's character; and, despite the brilliant prospects offered her, she would listen to no word on the subject. Later on her prudence elicited the admiration of her friends; for the high-born suitor turned out to be an adventurer, who finally fell into the hands of justice.[1]

The unsuccessful issue of these two attempts to keep their young sister in Poitou did not discourage the Baron and Baroness des Francs. They were actively engaged in another negotiation of the same nature, when a letter from President Frémyot called Jeanne-Françoise home. André, the youngest of the family, had gone to Paris to finish his studies, and the President was alone. Our young saint, moreover, was approaching her twentieth year, and M. Frémyot, anxious about her future, was already anticipating for her an alliance with one of the most honorable families of Burgundy.

The two sisters read this letter in tears, for they loved each other with tender affection. They had never been separated, and between them no cloud had ever cast a shadow.[2] Jeanne-Françoise, however, did not hesitate, but began at once to prepare for departure. Full of regret at leaving her sister and of desire to see her father once more, she started for Burgundy. Here awaited her happiness pure and unalloyed, which was to be followed by a long period of mourning; hither God called her to present to the world a spectacle of heroic sacrifices.

Such were the infancy, girlhood, and early youth of St. Chantal.

A traveller, setting out at break of day, perceives sometimes before sunrise a streak of soft light illumining the horizon, a happy prognostic of noontide splendor. The historian experiences a similar emotion when bringing before his

[1] *Mémoires*, unpublished, of Mother Angélique de la Croix.

[2] "They separated from each other with the greatest regret," says Mother de Chaugy. "They had always lived together so affectionately and peacefully that the least unkind word or dispute had never arisen between them." (*Mémoires*, chap. iii.) All the other biographers of St. Chantal speak in the same manner.

fellow-men those great lights in the spiritual firmament that we call saints. From their cradle he can sometimes foresee their whole life. In the present instance, for example, we have in the lovely and courageous child, in the pure and noble-minded maiden of eighteen, a fair foretokening of the virtues that were to adorn her after-life. The firmness, energy, and exquisite sensibility that characterize the young girl are merely the germs of those qualities one day to cast a golden halo around the brow of the wife, the mother, and the religious. They are the foreshadowings of that faith at whose *fiat* mountains are moved; of that tenacity of purpose which allows no obstacle to interfere with the accomplishment of God's designs; and of that supernatural generosity and zeal which, leading her from sacrifice to sacrifice, force commendation from the lips of St. Francis de Sales and tears from the eyes of St. Vincent de Paul.

And yet, at the period we are now about to close, our saint had not the slightest presentiment of her future vocation. She who was destined to clothe the wilderness with flowers, to lead so many souls into solitude and there teach them the mysteries of divine love, was now preparing to enter the tumultuous paths of life. Nay more, she was on the very point of contracting a willing alliance which, humanly speaking, was to rivet the bonds that attached her to the world.

CHAPTER II.

ST. CHANTAL'S MARRIAGE AT THE CASTLE OF BOURBILLY.

1592.

The husband whom President Frémyot had in view for his daughter was a young lord of twenty-seven, the eldest son of the illustrious race of the Rabutins, and the last descendant, by the mother's side, of St. Bernard's family.[1] His name was Christopher II., Baron de Chantal, and he resided at the castle of Bourbilly, two leagues from Semur. His father, an old Leaguer, shared President Frémyot's political principles, and, since 1589, they had been fighting side by side in the valiant campaigns of Semur and Flavigny. The son had inherited his father's bravery. "He was very gentle," says Bussy-Rabutin, "and this amiable character often involved him in quarrels with certain persons who imagined that a man cannot be brave without being a braggart; but his sword-thrusts soon disabused them of that opinion."[2] At the age of twenty he had already fought eighteen duels, in all which he came off victorious, and, happily, without having slain any one, when the war of the League presented him a more worthy opportunity to display his valor. His cool and fearless intrepidity distinguished him on the field. Such qualities in so young a man, united to a deep sense of honor and, strange as it may seem when we recall his numerous duels, a lively faith and great

[1] De Maupas: *Vie de la Vénérable Mère de Chantal*, p. 13. See, also, *Procès de Béatification:* Depositions of Mother Marie-Philiberte de Monthouz and Sister Marie-Antoinette de Sacconay, *super art.* ix.

[2] *Histoire Généalogique de la Maison de Rabutin, dressée par Messire Roger de Rabutin.* MS. This manuscript, which contains interesting details of the greater part of the persons introduced into this *Life*, is in the public library of Dijon.

delicacy of conscience, drew upon him general admiration. He was cheerful, affable, and communicative. He cultivated literature, wrote poetry, and conversed wonderfully well. In a word, to the faith and courage of a knight of the Middle Ages he joined the intellectual culture and elegant manners of a nobleman of the seventeenth century. President Frémyot had been struck by the union of so many rare qualities in so young a man, and he obtained his appointment to the captaincy of the garrison of Semur. The clear-sighted statesman thought that he could not confide to a more faithful sword the guardianship of the town chosen as the parliamentary seat of the province, and he even allowed the young man to aspire to his daughter's hand.

Mademoiselle Frémyot was just completing her twentieth year. The old *Mémoires* say: "She was well formed, her bearing stately. Her whole appearance was beautiful, graceful, and sprightly, with not a trace of affectation. Her disposition was gay and lively, her understanding quick and clear, and her judgment solid. There was not the least indication of fickleness or frivolity about her. In a word, she was really what they named her, 'The perfect lady'; and it was with regret that the inhabitants of Dijon saw her leave for Bourbilly." [1]

Mother de Chaugy supposes that the first interviews between the Baron de Chantal and Mademoiselle Frémyot took place at Dijon, and that they were married there. But this is an error, copied repeatedly by all subsequent biographers of St. Chantal. The civil war was then at its height, and President Frémyot could not with impunity appear at Dijon.[2] The marriage contract, which we have been so fortunate as to find at Annecy, gives interesting and important information upon the subject till now unpublished.[3] We see

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 12.

[2] *Archives municipales de Dijon:* Decrees of the Municipality, in the years 1589, 1590, 1591, and 1592.

[3] See Note III., at end of volume. We give there the text of the marriage contract, taken from an authentic copy. This copy was obtained in 1714, through the efforts of Mother de Thésut, Superioress of the convent of the Visitation at Dijon. In the *Annales* of that house lately published by Very Rev. M. Colet, Vicar-General of Dijon, and now Bishop of Luçon, we read: "Our most honored Sisters

that it was signed, not at Dijon, where a price had, in some measure, been set on President Frémyot's head; nor at Thotes, where he had "but a miserable country-house, incapable of resisting the first attack;" but "at the castle and stronghold of Bourbilly;" that is to say, contrary to custom and because of the existing necessity, in the young Baron's own house. Besides the two most deeply interested in the matter, the following persons were present and signed the contract: Baron de Chantal, the young nobleman's father; President Frémyot, our saint's father; M. Jean Frémyot, Prior of Val-des-Choux, and the future bride's paternal uncle, who, in all probability, blessed the marriage; M. Charles d'Esbarres, Squire, dwelling at Semur, her maternal uncle; and M. Jean-Jacques de Neufchèzes, Baron des Francs, her brother-in-law. The names of her uncle Claude Frémyot and of her brother André do not appear among the signatures. The absence of the former was caused, doubtless, by the refusal of the municipal authorities of Dijon to furnish him a passport to Bourbilly; and André Frémyot was then pursuing his studies in Paris.

The contract having been signed on the afternoon of December 28, 1592, and "in anticipation and contemplation of the future marriage," it is evident that the religious ceremony must have taken place on the following day, the 29th, and not on the 28th, as Bussy-Rabutin asserts.[1]

of Annecy had been long trying to find a copy of our holy Mother de Chantal's marriage contract, this paper being a necessary formality for the process of her beatification. The Superioress of our house, Mother Madeleine-Séraphine, employed persons devoted to the cause to look for it. It was found at last, at Époisses, a little village near Dijon, whither the office of the notary of that city who had drawn it up had been removed. Our Mother had a collated copy of it taken at a cost of two hundred francs." (*Annales de la Visitation de Dijon*, p. 195.) It is this copy that is still preserved in the convent of the Visitation, Annecy, and from which we have taken our copy. The statement made in the *Annales*, however, that the marriage contract was drawn up by a notary of Dijon is not correct. It was made "before François Boëdot, Royal Notary of the bailiwick of Auxois, residing at Époisses." As regards the original of the contract, all our efforts to find it have been futile.

[1] Bussy-Rabutin: *Généalogie manuscrite.* "Christopher, son of

Jeanne-Françoise was then twenty years, eleven months, and six days old.

The reader will probably take an interest in the conditions of the contract. The young Baron de Chantal was already in possession of the Bourbilly estate, having received it on attaining his majority. His father gave him as a marriage portion for himself and his heirs in perpetuity the land and seigniory of Sauvigny, with all its rights and dependencies, reserving, however, the usufruct for himself during life. This estate was about a league from Bourbilly. Besides an annual income of two hundred crowns to be raised on the least encumbered property of her future husband, the bride-elect was to enjoy as a jointure during her life the castle of Bourbilly. "And, moreover, the husband-elect was to provide his future wife with rings and jewels to the value of six hundred crowns and furnish her with a carriage drawn by four good horses." President Frémyot gave and assigned to his daughter as a marriage dower the sum of sixteen thousand six hundred and sixty-six crowns, one-half to be paid down, the other after his death. This was a considerable sum in those days, being equivalent to fifty thousand livres.

It would be difficult to estimate the value of the Bourbilly estate at the time of the marriage. Fifty years later, the Marchioness de Sévigné, granddaughter of our saint, wrote to the Countess de Grignan: "At last, my dear daughter, I am once more in my ancestral castle. I have found my lovely meadows, my little river, and my beautiful mill just where I left them. They have lopped the trees before the door, which adds greatly to the beauty of the entrance. There is an abundance of wheat here, but not a word about *caron*, that is, not a sou. If you had no wheat, I would offer you some of mine, for I have twenty thousand bushels to sell. I am crying famine in the midst of plenty; and yet I have secured fourteen thousand livres, and given a new lease on the same terms. This is all I had to do. The

Guy de Rabutin, remained two years with his father, during which time he married Jeanne Frémyot, December 28, 1592."

Abbé de Coulanges would value this estate at one hundred thousand crowns." [1]

But when the Baroness de Chantal went to reside at Bourbilly, the property was far from being so valuable, for everything was in great disorder. At least ten years had elapsed since the death of the young Baron's mother, and since then the rebuilding in part of the castle, the expensive eccentricities of the old Baron, the youth of his son, the war particularly ruinous at that period, and the state of discomfort into which a household inevitably falls when not directed by the hand of a woman, had considerably diminished the revenue of the estate. The servants pillaged the house, the rents were in arrears, and the land produced nothing. To crown all, the young Baron, wounded in battle and taken prisoner, had been obliged to borrow money for his ransom. This, of course, increased his pecuniary embarrassment. "My daughter," wrote Mother de Chantal thirty years later to one of her daughters who had just been married, "attend carefully to the government of your household. . . . If I had not had the courage to do so at the beginning of my married life, we should not have had the means to live, for we had a smaller income than yours, and fifteen thousand crowns of debt." [2]

To these details upon the marriage of our saint, we should wish to add others still more interesting. How did she prepare herself for an action so serious, for so holy and responsible a sacrament? What were her faith, modesty, recollection, and fervent prayer at a moment in which the bride often brings to the foot of the altar a heart inebriated with the vain joys of the world? History is silent upon these points. We know only that Jeanne-Françoise accepted the Baron de Chantal from her father's hand as if God Himself had presented him to her, and that she gave him at once her heart and vowed him a love full of respect and

[1] Monmerqué: *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné*, vol. i. p. 110.

[2] Letter of St. Chantal to her daughter, Madame de Toulongeon, 1625. This letter is preserved in the archives of the convent of the Visitation, Annecy. These fifteen thousand crowns were gold crowns; and as a gold crown was equal to three livres, the debt was forty-five thousand livres.

devotedness. How unalterable was that love, we shall soon see. The young husband was charmed with the beauty of his bride, but he was too good a Christian not to value her virtues and sterling qualities far more than outward loveliness. He returned her an affection that nothing could weaken.

All historians are unanimous on this point. "The young couple," says one of the deponents at the process of St. Chantal's canonization, "presented at Bourbilly a picture of the holiest marriage possible. They had but one heart and one soul. The saint venerated and obeyed her young husband whilst cherishing him with pure, tender, and ardent love. In return she was dearly loved and honored by him with the most intimate confidence. This is a public and well-known fact." [1] Mother de Chaugy says: "God rendered their chaste affection so sincere, true, and reciprocal, that there never was between them the least dispute, nay, not even a contradiction." [2] Bussy-Rabutin, despite his inclination to backbite, agrees with all others on this subject. In the following beautiful testimony from his pen there is exaggeration only in the first sentence: "Previously to his marriage, Baron de Chantal was very gallant; but finding his wife so beautiful and accomplished, he devoted himself to her service and loved her with extraordinary tenderness. His frequent absence from her, which was, in fact, longer than his sojourn at home, served to nourish his love even till death. When he was away with the army or at court, she gave herself entirely to God; when he returned home, she gave herself entirely to him." [3]

The frequent absence of which Bussy-Rabutin speaks was caused by the religious wars still troubling the kingdom at that period. In 1593, Henry IV., who was preparing to abjure Protestantism, and who, wishing to strike a decisive blow, had need of all his forces, inquired for the Baron de Chantal, "whom he loved and esteemed," and commanded his father to send him at once to rejoin the royal standard.

[1] Process of Canonization: Deposition of Claude Latour, *super art.* xiii.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy.

[3] Bussy-Rabutin: *Vie abrégée.*

The young Baron did not hesitate. Although married only three months, he promptly prepared to leave Bourbilly. He took with him a letter from his father to the king, in which the old warrior apologized for having detained his son so long in Burgundy and for sending him now so badly equipped. With great dignity he solicited for him the royal favor.[1]

On the eve of his departure from home, the young Baron and Baroness, walking under the great trees of Bourbilly, held that long conversation too briefly related by the old biographers. In it Baron de Chantal begged his young wife to take charge of the management of his entire estate. But she alleged her inexperience, the inclination she felt to devote herself to God, and the impossibility, as she said, of reconciling a life of recollection and prayer with the worry of duties consequent on a large household. In reply to these objections, her husband proved that there was no incompatibility in the matter, and quoted Holy Scripture, in which it is declared that the wise woman builds up her house, and the strong woman puts her hand to everything. He crowned his beautiful argument by citing the example

[1] Bussy-Rabutin : *Histoire Généalogique.* We shall quote a few lines from this letter. In the course of this work we shall have to relate things too discreditable to the old Baron not to make it a matter of justice to show him now in his fairest light, acting under the influence of that noble generosity, unwavering fidelity, and honorable pride which characterized the old French nobility. "With regard to my son," were the closing words of the letter, "I am very sorry, Sire, on account of the good fortune and honor he enjoys in your esteem, that my means, exhausted by former services, do not second my sincere and faithful affection. It is with difficulty and only at the point of the sword that I can draw anything from the little that remains to me. This deficiency, Sire, you can supply by your liberality, giving to this young man, who is devoted to you and willing to serve you, the means to follow you in the magnanimous and heroic exploits and just undertakings by which you are immortalizing your name. My regret at the long stay he has made, longer than I would have desired, his old wounds having opened again and required tedious nursing, and the affairs of my house having induced me to marry him, will serve as an excuse for him and for me, likewise, if in the old French I speak too candidly. I beg God to bestow upon you, Sire, prosperity, health, and a long and happy life."

of his own mother, a woman of high birth and still more exalted virtue. Though reared at court, she retained nothing of it excepting her polished manners and high notions of honor. On her arrival at Bourbilly, she had taken in hand the direction of the house, put everything in order, and preserved the estate from ruin at a time of great need. To her active attention to temporal affairs she added the most tender and heroic piety, which became most evident at the hour of her death. For many years she had in patient silence endured a cancer in her breast. So great was her self-command that no one had the least suspicion of her state. When, at last, she was obliged to submit to the most excruciating operations, she replied to those who wished to bind her in the following beautiful words: "Reason and conscience are the strongest bonds that can bind a Christian. Fear not. I have accustomed myself to suffering by looking at my Crucifix." And, in fact, she uttered not a word, not a groan escaped her lips. Whilst the physicians were cauterizing her flesh, she merely raised her eyes to heaven. The operation was badly performed, and she died a short time after, leaving those around her in doubt as to which they should most extol, her patience, her modesty, or her charity.

This beautiful recital, mingled as it was with the tears of parting, made a deep impression on Madame de Chantal. She assured her husband that he should never regret the confidence he had placed in her, and expressed her determination to begin at once the superintendence of his affairs. From that day forward there was seen in her that practical genius which had lain hidden for want of an opportunity to display itself, and which next to her virtue is the greatest glory of St. Chantal.

As her husband's absence was to last about four or five months, she resolved to take advantage of it to regulate her household. The first reform that she undertook was that of her servants. She knew that example is a more effective teacher than precept. With this point in view and wishing, also, to superintend them more closely, she determined to rise with them at five o'clock. She said morning prayers with them and, in order to facilitate their hearing Mass every day, she made arrangements for the daily cele-

bration at an early hour of the Foundation Mass in the castle chapel. This Mass had been discontinued since her saintly mother-in-law's death. By this means all, even the field-laborers, could hear it. Every evening before retiring the servants gave her an account of their work of the day. At noon she frequently took her sewing or spinning and went to sit among them, profiting by such moments to lead their untutored minds, by pious and familiar conversation, to the knowledge and love of God. On Sundays she took them with her to the parochial Mass; and that they might be able to join more solemnly in the singing of the *Credo*, she used to practise it herself with such as had a good voice. It sometimes happened that during these rehearsals, which usually took place in the kitchen or barn, she could not restrain her enthusiasm. "Oh," she would exclaim, "how happy should we be to shed our blood for the faith! But we are not worthy to do so, and we must humble ourselves at the thought." She had received these impressions in childhood, she said, and had never ceased to feel them increasing within her.[1]

She treated her farmers almost the same as her servants. Every month they were required to present themselves before her to pay their rent and to receive her orders, which, if important (and we look upon this fact as a striking proof of her practical turn of mind), were always given in writing. Such care made it impossible for her directions to be changed or eluded. Even these precautions did not always satisfy her. She would frequently mount her horse and surprise them at their work on the most distant farms. But such surprises were most agreeable, for our young saint with the talent to enforce obedience possessed in a still higher degree that of making herself loved.

Such course of action obviates the necessity of punishing faults, since it prevents them. St. Chantal's biographers speak wisely when they say, "A great mark of her mild and prudent administration is the fact that, during the eight years of her married life and the nine of her widowhood passed in the world, she scarcely ever changed her servants.

[1] Depositions of Sister Marie-Valentine de Bellair and of Mother Rosalie Greyffié.

She did, indeed, dismiss two, because she could not prevail upon them to correct certain vices to which they were addicted. She was neither a scold nor a wrangler among her servants. Her virtue made her equally feared and loved. In a word, her house was the abode of peace, virtue, courtesy, Christian piety, and a truly noble and innocent joy." [1]

The reader is, probably, astonished at our insisting on details apparently unworthy of insertion in a life so full of dramatic interest. But as Bossuet well remarks: "To govern a family, to edify servants, to practise justice and mercy, to do the good God wishes to be done, and to bear the evils He sends, are simple things. They are those common practices of Christian life that Jesus Christ will extol at the last day before His angels and His Heavenly Father. Empires will be abolished, their history will fall into oblivion," he eloquently adds, "and the brilliant deeds that they record will never again be mentioned." [2]

Besides this, such examples gradually became very rare toward the close of the sixteenth century. The taste for housewifery and domestic cares, which formerly prevailed in Christian society, and upon which the highest ladies among the nobility and gentry prided themselves, began to decline in the seventeenth and utterly disappeared in the eighteenth century. A life idle and careless came to be looked upon as indispensable to high society. The mistress of the house no longer directed her domestic affairs; such a proceeding would have been considered derogatory. It was the fashion to rise very late, make the toilet three or four times during the day, pay visits until evening, and pass the nights in play. This was called high life. Madame de Chantal was not only too virtuous, but far too high-minded to fall into such habits. Her deportment, so modest before her marriage, became still more so after it. Finding herself in the country and at the head of a large household, she laid aside the elegant apparel of her youth, the silken robes to which as a noble lady she had a right, and clothed herself with the plainest materials.[3]

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 20.

[2] *Oraison funèbre du Prince de Condé*, part ii.

[3] Isambert: *Recueil des Lois de Henri III. et Henri IV. sur les Habits.*

But in this, as in every other respect, she was careful to do nothing displeasing to Baron de Chantal. One of the deponents at the process of her canonization says: "She always dressed in woollen, excepting when she thought herself bound to gratify her husband by wearing the silken robes trimmed with gold that had been made for her marriage."[1] "These woollen robes, however," says Mother de Chaugy, "were worn with so much grace and propriety that she looked a hundred times better than they who ruined their families to wear extravagant finery. She stood in no need to borrow the lustre of costly stuffs to heighten that of her beauty," adds Mother de Chaugy in her own shrewd way.[2] The loveliness of her soul was reflected upon her countenance. It adorned her with that innocence and modesty with which no material beauty is comparable.

Not satisfied with renouncing vanity, Madame de Chantal devoted herself, also, to labor. "Her hands were never idle," says one of her biographers. After hearing the daily Mass, she visited the kitchens, the courtyards, and sometimes even the most distant farms. She had an eye to everything. Having given her directions with that intelligence which leads to a happy issue, she would return home gay and gracious as ever, and resume her sewing, which she never interrupted excepting when obliged to receive visitors. Even then, unless the rank of her guests demanded otherwise, she called for her little work-table, and with a gracious excuse continued her sewing.

A life so well occupied offered no leisure for reading those dangerous romances then commencing to circulate. The state of literature in the sixteenth century is well known. It was reviving under the twofold form of immorality and scepticism. Montaigne had laughed at everything, Rabelais had sullied everything. A host of disciples were trying to imitate the derision of the one and the libertinism of the other. Grave men bemoaned the evil. Even St. Francis de Sales, with all his meekness, could not repress his indigna-

[1] Depositions of Mother Marie-Aimée de Sonnaz and of Sisters Marie-Philiberte de Monthouz and Marie-Françoise de Gruel, *super art.* xvi.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 17.

tion when speaking of "those writings that weak minds admire on account of the vain subtleties they imbibe from them: such as that infamous Rabelais and certain other writers of our age, who make a profession of doubting and despising everything, of ridiculing all the maxims of antiquity."[1] Although the old Baron de Chantal had passed his life in the camp, a number of these books, some frivolous, others licentious, procured for the purpose of whiling away the long winter evenings, were to be found in the castle. Madame de Chantal had them all burned. She held them in such horror that she would touch them not even with her foot. "Her ordinary reading was the *Lives of the Saints* and the *History of France*."[2] Such books were for her a source of great and genuine pleasure. In them she acquired a daily increasing knowledge and love of the Church and of France, her heavenly and her earthly country, for which every heart ought to beat with affection.

The service of the poor, also, helped to fill and sanctify a life already so full. Every day after dinner, she went to the castle gate, where the poor assembled to receive their food. She took their porringers herself and filled them with soup, cut their bread, and waited upon them as affectionately as if they were her own children. It was sometimes remarked that she suddenly became pensive and silent, whilst her poor people were taking their dinner, and tears rolled down her cheeks. Once she was heard to murmur: "I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat." When she missed any one of her poor pensioners, or if Dame Jeanne (one of the oldest servants of the castle, and who was thus called more through respect for her virtue than for her years) had discovered some new objects of charity, she would set out in haste, no matter what the hour, to visit them. Laden with bread, clothing, and medicines, she respectfully entered the smokiest huts, and distributed her gifts so graciously and with words so kind that, according to the touching testimony of the poor of Bourbilly, "it was a

[1] Letter to a nobleman about to begin his service at court, Dec. 8, 1610.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 18.

pleasure to be sick, in order to be visited by the holy Baroness."

One of the witnesses at the process of her canonization gave the most interesting details of her charity. After taking the customary oath before the Apostolic Notaries, this witness, Jeanne Pouthiot, an old shepherdess belonging to the castle of Bourbilly, affirmed that she was a native of Bourbilly and ninety years old. The Commissaries having examined her and found her, in spite of her age, "of good judgment and perfect memory," she gave the following testimony: "I saw Lady Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot in her castle and stronghold of Bourbilly about sixty-five years ago. The only occupation of the said lady was to serve the poor sick of the village of Bourbilly and assist them with her own means, by daily distributing extra alms from the said castle. Besides this, the said lady always had prepared a separate vessel of meat and broth intended exclusively for the sick poor. She used to carry it to them herself, and serve them with her own hands in every possible way. She would lift them up, wash them, and make their bed. I myself saw her do this for the following persons when attacked with an epidemic: Madeleine Fardeau, wife of François Milleton, laborer at Bourbilly; Celse-Bénigne Piverneau, Pierre Chaillot, Aubert Piverneau, and others in their own homes. She nursed them and clothed them with her own linen as tenderly as if they had been her children." [1]

Another witness, Brigitte Baubis, daughter-in-law of Marguerite Potot, one of the saint's servants, not only related the same facts, but added others still more admirable. After being interrogated on oath by the Apostolic Commissaries, and acknowledged of sound mind and good memory, she declared that the said Lady de Chantal was particularly noted for her charity toward the poor women of Bourbilly at the time of childbirth. She remembered hearing her mother-in-law, Marguerite Potot, often say that she used always to accompany the lady when visiting women under these circumstances. She exhorted the aforesaid Potot, her

[1] Process of Canonization: Deposition of the inhabitants of Bourbilly.

servant, to do likewise, and gave her many things for that purpose. During the three months that the aforenamed Madeleine Fardeau, wife of François Milleton, laborer of the said village of Bourbilly, was sick after childbirth, the said lady never failed to visit her daily. She took with her the said servant Potot, and carried broth and other nourishment to the sick woman. Not satisfied with all this, the said lady used herself to take the said Fardeau out of bed, assist her so far as to wash and clean her like one of her own children, and clothe her with her own linen.[1]

The following incident, related by the same witnesses, is still more beautiful. One evening Madame de Chantal was notified that the wife of Antoine Rigol, a laborer of Bourbilly, was very ill in consequence of a painful delivery, which was endangering the life of both mother and child. The saint hurried to the sick woman, and passed part of the night nursing her. When all hope of saving her had vanished, the Baroness yielded to the earnest entreaties of those present to take some rest. She had gone but a few minutes when a change for the better was perceived in the sick woman, and the delivery, that terrible delivery which might have cost the life of both mother and child, took place as if by a miracle. The husband's joy may be imagined. But how express his astonishment and gratitude when, on opening the door of his cottage, he beheld the Baroness, whom he thought at home, kneeling in the darkness before his lowly threshold! He felt that to her he owed the life of his wife and child. Such scenes occur only in the lives of the saints. When we recall that she who performed these acts of heroic charity was very little over twenty, of great name and fortune, with everything calculated to incline the heart to life's pleasures, our tears start involuntarily, and we bless God, who is admirable in His saints.

On her return from these holy missions, the Baroness often found other objects of compassion awaiting her. By virtue of his seigniorial rights, Baron de Chantal adminis-

[1] Process of Canonization: Deposition of the inhabitants of Bourbilly.

tered justice at Bourbilly, and for various offences the peasants were confined in the prisons of the castle. Our saint was the guardian angel of the luckless delinquents. If the fault was trivial, she would hunt up M. de Chantal and, by her entreaties and caresses, obtain the offender's deliverance. Sometimes even she took advantage of such occasions gently to reproach her husband for his hastiness. He would reply: "True, I am a little hasty; but you are too kind." If the offence was grave and her husband proved inflexible, she used secretly to visit and console the prisoner; and as the dungeon was damp, she would, after the household had retired to rest, go down stealthily, unlock the prison door, and conduct the poor criminal to a room in which she had prepared a good bed for him. Next morning early, she would reconduct him to his dungeon, and then with a smiling countenance and full of the joy that accompanies a good action go bid M. de Chantal good-morning.[1]

Whilst our young saint was thus giving free vent to the compassion and generosity of her heart, she received news that painfully affected her. Marguerite, her elder sister, who, it will be remembered, had come from Poitou to be present at her wedding, had not yet returned home. She spent part of her time at Bourbilly and part with her father at Semur. During one of her visits to the latter, she was suddenly seized with so violent an illness that M. Frémyot wrote to the Baroness de Chantal to come in haste to Semur if she wished to give her sister a last embrace. Madame de Chantal started at once, and arrived in time only to see her die. Marguerite was scarcely twenty-three years old. She had two children, and she was expecting in a few months the birth of a third. To increase the affliction of all, the Baron des Francs was away at the springs seeking a remedy for the disease that shortly after bore him to the grave.[2] The saint's grief at this terrible stroke may readily be conceived. She tenderly loved Marguerite, from whom she had scarcely ever been separated, and between whom and herself the sweetest and most perfect union had ever existed.[3] She

[1] Deposition of Sister Marie-Aimée de Sonnaz, *super art.* xiv.
[2] Journal of Councillor Breunot, June 19, 1593.
[3] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 12.

wept bitterly over her death and took the two little orphans, Bénigne and Jacques, to the castle of Bourbilly, to await the return of their father, M. des Francs.[1]

On this affliction two others, even more sensibly felt by Madame de Chantal, followed in quick succession. Twice, in 1593 and in 1594, she had the happiness of becoming a mother, and each time she saw her child die immediately after its birth, thus experiencing in one short moment the purest joy and the most acute sorrow. God was beginning to hold to the lips of His servant that bitter chalice from which later on He willed her to drink long draughts. But He only raised it to her lips. Before the hour of bitterest trial, He had in reserve for her six years of pure and perfect happiness. She saw her union with the Baron de Chantal blessed with a son and three daughters. We should wish to know what sentiments filled the soul of the young saint each time that God vouchsafed her the great blessing of becoming a mother. What was her gratitude for so great an honor? What was her love for the young soul confided to her? What still greater piety, purity of heart, and union with God were hers that she might communicate to the young being only holy inclinations? Unhappily, history touches on this portion of Madame de Chantal's career with provoking brevity. We know only that her first act after their birth was to raise them in her arms toward heaven in order to consecrate them to God and place them under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. We know, also, that, notwithstanding her youth, delicate health, and responsibility as mistress of a large household, she nourished them with her own milk. This is all that we are told on the subject. We must, consequently, wait a few years before we shall be able to study Madame de Chantal as a mother. We shall

[1] See in the office of Maitre Jacob, Notary, the original of a marriage contract, dated August 26, 1601, and signed by Madame de Chantal. It is the marriage contract of the Baroness des Francs' housekeeper, whom our saint had taken to Bourbilly with her sister's children, and who did not leave her new mistress until she was married in 1601. St. Chantal signed the contract and made a present to the bride. From this contract we learn that, in 1601, the Baron des Francs was dead and that President Frémyot was the guardian of the two orphans, Bénigne and Jacques.

then see her presiding over the education of her children, moulding their childhood and youth, and instilling into their hearts those principles of solid virtue that her son never forgot even in the midst of the dissipation of court and army life, and that made of her daughters amiable and pious women of the world, strong and faithful Christians.

CHAPTER III.

MADAME DE CHANTAL IN THE MIDST OF THE PLEASURES AND HONORS OF THE WORLD.—TRIUMPH OF HENRY IV. AND HIS ENTRANCE INTO DIJON.—ST. CHANTAL'S FIRST MIRACLES.—DEATH OF THE BARON, HER HUSBAND.

It must not be imagined that Madame de Chantal led a life of solitude at the castle of Bourbilly, occupied only with her children, her servants, and the poor. Life in a castle at that period was, during part of the year at least, very gay and varied. The nobility had not yet forsaken the country for the city. The solitude of their castles often became wearisome to them, so they frequently sallied forth in summer for war, still the favorite diversion in those days of expiring chivalry; and in winter they spent their time in gaming, in hunting, or in conversation, the charms of which were beginning to be acknowledged and sought toward the end of the sixteenth century.

The castle of Bourbilly was admirably situated for such pleasures.

It was a beautiful structure, recently rebuilt by the old Baron de Chantal, who had adorned the interior with all the luxury and taste of that epoch. Seen from without, the castle, which was surrounded by a strong gothic wall flanked by towers at the four corners, formed a square, in the centre of which was a court. A magnificent avenue of old trees led up to the castle, and the entrance was closed by a drawbridge. Turned from its course, the Serain, a small neighboring river, descended into the valley, crossed it, irrigated the meadows, and, after having filled the castle-moat, had its course suddenly arrested by a strong dam, from which it plunged into a narrow gorge, swelled into a torrent, fell in cascades, and, rushing on through the plain, turned the wheels

of several mills. All around the castle were to be seen fertile meadows, hills covered with picturesque vineyards, and, in the distance, large forests filled with game.

The neighborhood of a dozen such castles, scattered here and there throughout the surrounding country and belonging to royalist noblemen either relatives or friends of the Frémyot and De Chantal families, greatly added to the attractions of this beautiful abode. First, at Vic-de-Chassenay, in the parish of Bourbilly, lived M. Bourgeois de Crépy, one of the Presidents of the Burgundian Parliament. He had warmly espoused the cause of M. Frémyot, and for years the greatest intimacy existed between them. His two daughters, Marguerite, who married the son of President Bruslard, and Rose, who later become the Abbess of Puy-d'Orbe, were both very pious and friends of our saint from childhood. A little further off, at Époisses, lived Louis d'Ancienville de Bourdillon, a valiant soldier, who took an important part in the wars of the League, and whose devotedness to his cause Henry IV. rewarded by raising his manor at Époisses into a marquisate. It was he who received Madame de Chantal's oath of fealty at her husband's death. His wife, Claude de Saulx, was a daughter of Marshal de Tavannes and sister of that illustrious Guillaume de Tavannes who, with M. Frémyot, had raised the standard of Henry IV. in Burgundy. Contemporary writers call her "the phœnix of her age, the paragon of faithful wives." Her great virtue and irreproachable morals won for her a prominent place among St. Chantal's friends.

Guillaume de Tavannes himself lived close by. His castle of Corcelles-lès-Semur was only two leagues from Bourbilly, to which he was a constant and welcome visitor. Still young and recently married to the only daughter of the illustrious Chabot-Charny, the lieutenant-general who had saved Burgundy from the horrors of St. Bartholomew's Day, already celebrated for his bravery as a soldier and his ability as a general, the Count de Tavannes was, also, a cultivated scholar. He wielded his pen as skilfully as he did the sword. During the winter he used to record his exploits of the spring and summer. His *Mémoires* of that time, many a page of which was written, doubtless, after his conversations

with Madame de Chantal, are stamped with loyalty and modesty. They make us love the man more than we admire the warrior. When relating his victories so quickly gained, his successful sieges, and able stratagems, he loses sight of self. "Praise be to God!" is his constant cry. Later on, when abandoned by Henry IV., for whom he had sacrificed everything, not a murmur escaped his lips. "A part of my services," he says, "was badly recompensed, but His Majesty was excusable on account of his great press of business." Throughout his *Mémoires* he is always the same, simple, modest, disinterested, ready to give the last drop of his blood to procure peace, and, when peace is signed, happy that there is no longer need of him, preferring that welfare which restores his sword to its scabbard to those civil wars that rendered its use necessary. Such was Guillaume de Tavannes. He was worthy to hold a prominent place in the circle of which Madame de Chantal was the soul. His young wife was no less deserving than he. She was very pious and intelligent.

These were the habitual visitors at Bourbilly Castle; but the circle was constantly increased by Madame de Chantal's delicate attention to her husband's inclinations. She knew that he loved society, of which he was an ornament, and she took pleasure in multiplying her invitations. Among the guests thus called to Bourbilly were Imbert de Marcilly, Lord of Cypierre and Governor of Semur; François de la Madeleine, Marquis de Ragny, and his high-spirited and courageous wife; Joachim de Dindeville, who resided in the castle of Grignon, then occupied by the troops of Count de Tavannes; Jacques de Chaugy, whose niece we shall later see adorning the rising Order of the Visitation with her talents and virtues; d'Anlezy, Lord of Chazelles, who, alas! by a careless shot from his arquebuse, put an end to these assemblies; and several other noblemen the ruins of whose castles add even yet to the charm of this lovely province.

When M. de Chantal was not with the army, almost every day witnessed some new diversion. In the morning the woods of Bourbilly echoed to the chase; in the evening all gathered around the immense hearths of the castle, in a hall of the olden times ornamented with painted ceiling, now re-

taining no trace of its former beauty, and with armorial panels upon which we can still distinguish the arms of the Rabutins.

What was Madame de Chantal in the midst of these reunions? Bussy-Rabutin will tell us in the following lines attributed to him. The account is so much the more valuable, as it represents her in her relations with society, at a period in which her virtue had not shone out most brilliantly, when the woman had not yet disappeared behind the aureola of the saint.

"The Baroness de Chantal possessed beauty and many other charms. She was above the medium height, her hair black, her face round, her eyes large, black, and sparkling, her complexion clear and very fair. Her lips were like coral, her smile charming. The majesty of her countenance was tempered by sweetness, and her glance, though mild, was full of sprightliness and intelligence. To these exterior charms were joined the happiest qualities of mind and heart. She possessed the virtues that form a pious Christian and the charms that make a woman lovable. Her soul was strong and generous, her sweetness and modesty incomparable, her mind cultivated and sprightly, her imagination lively, and her conversation refined. The least trifles became interesting from her lips. She jested sometimes but always returned to something more serious." [1]

[1] Manuscript belonging to the convent of Annecy. We have just found in the Visitation Convent of Mâcon a beautiful portrait of St. Chantal, dressed as a religious, but of a very youthful appearance. It is a faithful reproduction of Bussy's description of the saint. The traditions of the convent say that this canvas first represented the Baroness de Chantal in her worldly dress, and that the religious costume was afterward painted over the original. But, after a close examination by M. de Surigny, the tradition loses weight. We may, however, conclude that the portrait is a copy of one in which the Baroness de Chantal was dressed as a lady of the world, and that the painter, after having made an exact copy of her face and figure, gave her the religious habit, the heart, and the Crucifix, the usual emblems of the saint. Where is this original portrait now? Can any one tell us? Until it be found, and we do not despair of its recovery, the one in Mâcon is of great value. It shows us Madame de Chantal at the age of twenty-seven or eight, and proves the correctness of Bussy's description.

Mother de Chaugy pays very little attention to our saint's exterior beauty, which, though very important in our eyes, appears to have been a secondary matter in hers; and yet the little she says upon the subject precisely corresponds with Bussy's statement. She shows us Madame de Chantal charming all circles by the vivacity and sprightliness of her wit, as she sanctified the festivals of the Church by the fervor of her faith. Were a pleasure party proposed, she entered into it with all the ardor of her nature; but most adroitly and as if unintentionally, prevented Sunday's being chosen for it. If upon a feast-day there was to be a hunt, one half-hour before the time of starting a priest was ready to say Mass in the chapel, so that it was impossible for the sportsmen to refuse to assist at it. If a large company of visitors happened to be at the castle on a Sunday, Madame de Chantal would express a desire to attend High Mass in the parish church. Her proposal was generally met with objections. Her husband, out of deference to his guests, would represent to her that the obligation of hearing Mass could be as well complied with in the chapel as at a distance; but she replied that the nobility ought to set an example to the peasants, and that, besides, she took particular pleasure in praying with the people. Further resistance was impossible, and the whole company arose and followed our amiable saint to the parish church.[1]

This happy combination of courtesy and piety, and, to quote Bussy-Rabutin once more, this union of charms which render a woman agreeable with the virtues which make her a saint, were so striking in Madame de Chantal that the gentlemen and ladies of the neighborhood surnamed her "The perfect lady."

Such were the scenes at Bourbilly during the fall and winter. Spring and summer brought others. M. de Chantal would then arm his vassals, and set out to join the Count de Tavannes, the Marquis de Ragny, Lord de Cypierre, and, at first, under Marshal d'Aumont, later under Marshal de Biron, lay siege to Autun, Châlons, or Beaune. At such

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 17. Deposition of Mother Favre de Charmette, *super art.* xii.

times, Madame de Chantal never left her castle. She permitted neither games nor the chase nor pleasure parties. She even retrenched her already simple apparel, and to remarks made on the subject she would reply: "Speak not of that. The eyes that I should please are a hundred leagues from here; it is useless for me to adorn myself." If any distinguished guests arrived, they were received very politely, but with so great modesty and reserve, particularly if they were young noblemen, that it was plain to be seen it was an ill-chosen moment to speak of pleasure. "She prudently judged," says an old biographer, "that there are times and occasions when a woman must be a little discourteous if she would be very modest." [1]

Once she beautifully exemplified this maxim. We shall give the incident in Mother de Chaugy's words. "There was a young nobleman, a great friend of M. de Chantal, whom the devil had inspired with a criminal love for our saint. He was determined to gain his point, although the rare modesty of the young wife so held him in check that he did not venture to declare his infamous passion openly. Whenever M. de Chantal was at home, this young nobleman remained at Bourbilly under pretext of joining him in the chase. Once when he knew her husband was absent, the unfortunate man resolved to try his chance. He went to visit the Baroness, who received him as her husband's friend. As evening approached, and, seeing that he was beginning to turn the conversation to her praise, by a holy artifice and without letting him see that she was aware of his motive, she expressed regret that Baron de Chantal was not at home to entertain and amuse him; adding that, as for herself, in her husband's absence nothing was a source of pleasure to her, and that as business obliged her to pay a visit to a lady in the neighborhood, she would leave him that evening to the care of the servants. She then mounted her horse, and went to pass the night elsewhere. The poor nobleman was so astonished and abashed by this brilliant display of virtue, that he never afterward dared approach the Baroness in the absence of her husband." [2] The Baron returned shortly

[1] *Vie de la Vénérable Mère de Chantal*, by M. de Maupas, p. 22.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 22.

after, and the account he received of the affair increased his tender affection for his holy wife.

Whilst Madame de Chantal was thus giving in the interior of her castle these beautiful lessons of virtue, grave events were changing the face of France.[1]

When Henry IV. openly declared himself a Catholic, he dealt a blow at the League from which it never recovered. His rapid and brilliant victories, his felicitous and sometimes sublime appeals to the army before, during, and after battle, his attractive qualities, his misfortunes and adventures, even his defects, all contributed to accelerate his triumphant march. In the early part of the year 1594, the fire of enthusiasm was enkindled in Burgundy, and it soon spread throughout the province. Every day whole towns and villages rallied around Henry IV. The peasantry hailed the passage of the army with cries of "Long live the King, since he is now a Catholic!" The white flag floated from castle turrets, and seats were vacated in the Parliament of Dijon. The Leaguers were reduced to their last resources. In vain did they have recourse to threats and acts of violence. Nothing could check the current of sympathy flowing toward Henry IV. At last, on May 22, 1595, the Parliament submitted, and Dijon opened its gates to Marshal de Biron.[2]

[1] The details which we are about to give of Henry IV.'s entrance into Burgundy, and which we abridge with regret, are drawn from contemporary and unpublished documents. The two principal are *Mémoires du Conseiller Breunot sur la Ligue*, and the *Journal de ce qui s'est passé à la Réduction de la Ville de Dijon, en l'Obéissance du Roi Henri Quatrième.* These two valuable manuscripts belong to the library of the city of Dijon. The part taken in these events by President Frémyot and the Baron de Chantal was often related by the saint herself, and her account was faithfully preserved by the first Mothers of the Visitation. We shall here merely mention the *Mémoires* written by Mother de Chaugy and those still unpublished from the pen of Mother Paul-Hiéronyme Favrot. (*Archives d'Annecy.*)

[2] Nothing could be more interesting than the verbal processes of this last assembly of the Parliament. They portray the true character of the League, as it was understood by the great minds of that period. It was formed to prevent the accession of a Protestant to the throne. As soon as that Protestant had embraced the Catholic faith, it no longer had a right to exist, since the reason that had given it birth

He entered the city on the 25th, took possession of it in the King's name, and then repaired to the residence of President Frémyot, which had been hastily prepared for his reception.

The news of the surrender of Dijon was joyfully received by all who favored the claims of Henry IV. The Baron de Chantal hastened to join his father-in-law at Semur, whence both immediately set out for Dijon, the President to present to Marshal de Biron the homage of the Parliament of Semur, the Baron to offer his services to the royal cause. Madame de Chantal, who had accompanied her husband to Semur, returned alone to Bourbilly, her heart full of joy, though not without a shade of inquietude at the aspect of impending affairs; for a great battle seemed inevitable to perfect the triumph of Henry IV. She shut herself up in profound solitude to pray for her country and beg God to direct events Himself in which she had a vague presentiment that her father and her husband were to play a distinguished part.

Henry IV. did not delay to follow up his advantages.

no longer existed. This was clearly explained by Bruslard, one of the senior Presidents of the Parliament. He represented that "whilst the King professed the reformed religion, the Parliament had promulgated a just and holy Decree, forbidding the people to acknowledge him such as he then was; but that as God had touched his heart and led him back into the bosom of the Church, and since he was persevering therein, and as all the capital cities of the kingdom acknowledged him, it was no longer possible to refuse him their allegiance." He terminated by saying that the magistrates ought to weigh well their position; that they were King's Councillors and not the Councillors of the Duke of Mayenne; that they must, then, either acknowledge the King or dispense with his attendance. Such determined language, addressed to an assembly of magistrates still hesitating as to the course they should pursue, was followed by a long silence. "Each sat with covered head and in silence." In fact, not a single member of the Parliament thought otherwise than President Bruslard; motives of self-interest alone made them hesitate. President de Montholon energetically seconded President Bruslard's proposition. "The King," he said, "had been received into the Church, and he was persevering in the faith; the cause which had influenced their opposition to him no longer existed; they ought, therefore, to acknowledge his authority and add his name to the parliamentary seal." To present the question in this light was to decide it. (*Mémoires inédits du Conseiller Breunot.*)

Nine days after the surrender of Dijon to Marshal de Biron, he entered it in the midst of an immense concourse, June 4, 1595. On that day "he wore a doublet of white fustian out at the elbows,"[1] but his face was radiant with joy. He saluted the people right and left, as they shouted "Long live the King!" The ladies waved white scarfs; enthusiasm was at its height.[2]

Henry IV. merely passed through the city. The Spanish army was only a few leagues distant. It was even said that it had crossed the Saône, to come to the assistance of the Leaguers who had shut themselves up in the citadel of Dijon. The King wished to ascertain the truth of the report. Having, therefore, spent the night with Marshal de Biron, at President Frémyot's, in order to do honor to Marshal de Biron, who was lodging there, he set out next morning before daylight, accompanied by a handful of lords, among whom was the Baron de Chantal. These noblemen were provided with only their gorgets and pendants; they had neither casque nor cuish. The King himself carried only gilded arms. They started merely to reconnoitre. Not one of them, not even Henry himself, dreamed that they were marching to battle.

His troops were not even together. He had written to

[1] *Mémoires manuscrits* of M. de la Marc. He affirms that he had often heard his mother relate this incident.

[2] This enthusiasm did not, however, prevent the most minute precautions to ascertain whether Henry IV. was this time really converted. They still distrusted him a little, and twice, at the city gate and at the church door, he was required to swear publicly his belief in the Catholic faith. "At last," says Councillor Breunot, in his account of the King's entrance into Dijon, p. 123, "the King, preceded by a great number of noblemen, horsemen, and a large retinue, entered Dijon, between ten and eleven in the morning, through the gate of Saint-Pierre. The clergy, who were assembled at said gate to receive him, conducted him to the Holy Chapel, where he devoutly heard Mass, adored the Cross, gave the Kiss of Peace, said the *Confiteor* aloud, having previously twice protested, first at the gate of the city and afterward at the door of the church, that he would live and die in the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion, and this," mischievously adds Councillor Breunot, "into the hands of M. le Chanoine Desbarres, who, strangely enough, had been a member of the League," It was thus that the vanquished Leaguers covered their retreat.

the Marquis de Mirebeau, the Count de Grancey, and the Baron de Lux, to join him on the route, and he relied upon finding the other lords in the plains of Bèze and Saint-Seine, which he had appointed as a place of meeting. There he proposed tarrying for three or four days, in order to collect his army and thence proceed to the banks of the Saône, to meet the enemy in a general and decisive battle.

Suddenly, on the heights of Bèze, he learned that the Spaniards had hastened to cross the Saône and that they had been seen only a short distance off. He pushed on and fell in, without suspecting it, with the whole army of the enemy. Marshal de Biron, the first to meet the Spaniards, charged furiously and bore them down. Seeing them waver, Henry IV. rushed forward, followed only by a handful of noblemen and two hundred horsemen. The enemy had twelve thousand men, drawn up for battle. Fortunately, they knew not the small number of their opponents, and the fear of an ambuscade rendered them timid and undecided. The conflict soon became terrible. The handful of royalists, half-armed as they were, and thrown unprepared into the midst of a fully equipped army, multiplied their blows, hoping thus to hide their small number. At Arques and Ivry, Henry IV. had fought for glory; at Fontaine-Française, he fought for life. And he never fought better. The danger electrified him. Fearless yet prudent, full of fire yet maintaining his self-possession, encouraging and yet restraining his troops, he proved himself as great a general as he was a brave soldier. The Burgundian noblemen pressed around him and performed prodigies. Marshal de Biron was wounded by a cutlass stroke. The Baron de Lux had his horse killed under him. La Curée, Count de Montbard, was on the point of being pierced by a lance, when the King cried out to him, "Take care, Curée!"

In the heat of the engagement, Henry IV. seized the Marquis de Mirebeau by the hand, and cried out, "Charge there!" The order was obeyed, and the enemy began at once to give way and scatter. But no one attracted the King's attention more than the Baron de Chantal. He was everywhere. When Henry IV., whose ambition it was to be first in the fray, called out to his nobles in the thick of

the fight, "Back, my Lords! I wish to distinguish myself," the Baron was at his side. On one occasion in particular, the young Baron's valiant charge greatly contributed to the success of the day. That very evening Henry publicly proclaimed the fact. As a proof of his gratitude and esteem for the youthful hero, he invited him to follow him to Paris, and bestowed upon him a pension of twelve hundred crowns with a promise of the highest honors.[1]

Madame de Chantal's joy on the reception of this news may be readily imagined. Her husband's glory touched her heart, and her noble soul glowed with enthusiasm at the defeat of a foreign foe, the triumph of the French arms, the re-establishment of the Catholic religion, and the restoration of peace in a country so long disturbed by civil dissensions: results to which her husband's bravery had contributed.

The return of Henry IV. to Dijon was celebrated by brilliant festivities, during which he succeeded in gaining all hearts. He possessed in the highest degree those happy qualities and defects that form the charm and the peril of the French character. That open countenance and frank smile, that sprightly, fickle, and playful disposition, those flashes of wit which have always exercised such influence over the French people,—all these were his.

The Baron de Chantal accompanied the King in his triumphal entrance into Dijon, but next day, yielding to his desire to see his young wife, he obtained permission to set out for Bourbilly. He had been wounded at the battle of Fontaine-Française; but, not wishing to alarm her, he had kept her in ignorance of the fact. A few days of rest in the midst of the sweetest domestic happiness healed his wound, and he set

[1] Bussy-Rabutin: *Généalogie manuscrite.* "The Baron de Chantal distinguished himself especially at the battle of Fontaine-Française, where he was severely wounded before Henry's eyes, and, according to the testimony of that prince, he contributed not a little to the victory. The manner in which the King spoke of De Chantal after the battle was, in the opinion of such as know how to estimate glory, a greater honor than were the batons of some of the marshals of France of that reign to their possessors. Then as now, such recompenses were adjudged not always to the most worthy, but to the most lucky."

out for Semur, where President Frémyot desired to meet him without delay.

Everything was ready for the removal of the Parliament of Semur and Flavigny, and the Baron de Chantal and his troops were to form part of the escort. The journey was a triumph, especially the entrance into Dijon. Henry IV. received the courageous magistrates with honor. He called them "The Fathers of their country," and bestowed special distinction upon President Frémyot. "Sir," said Henry to him, "you have so happily fulfilled the duties of Senior President at Flavigny, that I wish you to hold the first place here also."

"Far be it from me, Sire," replied the President, "to intrude myself into another man's office during his lifetime! The Senior President is a good Catholic, he will serve Your Majesty loyally."

The King, unable to make him yield, ordered that the mail should hereafter stop at President Frémyot's residence and that all the royal despatches should be placed in his hands. But the good magistrate made so modest a use of this favor, that he never opened a single despatch before submitting it to the Senior President.

The day after this scene, in which the modesty and magnanimity of President Frémyot shone with so great lustre, a Councillor, accused of extortion and perfidy, was arrested and brought before the King. It was the very person who, during the late war, after having imprisoned young André Frémyot, had threatened the distressed father to send him the boy's head in a sack. What was the admiration of the King and all present at seeing the President advance and beg pardon for his enemy? He pleaded the prisoner's cause so eloquently and supported his petition by reasons so solid, that Henry IV. exclaimed with emotion:

"President, I see clearly that my clemency must be added to your goodness. You desire the life of your enemy. I grant it to you."

On another occasion, the King was conversing with some noblemen and, alluding to past events, he said abruptly to M. Frémyot:

"President, what would you have done, had I remained a Protestant?"

"Sire," replied M. Frémyot in that firm and modest tone which so well accorded with his character, "I confess that if Your Majesty had not cried, 'The Roman Church forever!' I never should have cried, 'Long live Henry IV.!'"

Henry laughed, and, turning toward his favorite, one of the marshals of France, he said:

"If you want to play the knave, seek an accomplice other than President Frémyot."

Henry IV. was not the only one to acknowledge President Frémyot's heroic sacrifices and noble conduct. The Parliament, at last, did him justice, and confided to him the most delicate missions. The very people who had plundered his house and so long held him in execration returned to him through that sentiment of justice which sooner or later awakes in the breast of the masses. They greeted him with enthusiastic acclamations, unanimously elected him Mayor of Dijon, and conducted him in triumph to his home.[1]

In the midst of these scenes, which we abridge with regret, since an acquaintance with the beautiful character of the father throws light upon that of the daughter, what had become of Madame de Chantal? Was she at her father's mansion when Marshal de Biron took up his residence there? Did she do the honors to Henry IV. when His Majesty stopped there? Did she follow from Semur to Dijon that triumphal procession which was led by her father and escorted by her husband? We cannot doubt it, although the humility of the saint casts a veil over this portion of her life. When we recall what has been already related of her amiable, modest, and dignified bearing, it will not be difficult

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 7.—*Procès de Canonisation.* See several of the depositions, particularly that of Mother Favre de Charmette.—Breunot: *Mémoires.* In this manuscript we find repeated proofs of the increasing influence exercised by President Frémyot. They are all the more valuable on account of the reluctance with which they are registered; for it must not be forgotten that Councillor Breunot was a very zealous Leaguer, a life-long opponent of President Frémyot, that he never forgave him his beautiful course of action and particularly his success, and that, consequently, his judgment of the President is to be very warily received.

to imagine her on that occasion, amid such homage, rejoicing in the glory of her father and her husband, and the triumph of her country and the Church.

Her stay at Dijon was, however, very short. Henry IV. soon left Burgundy, taking with him the young Baron, and she returned alone to Bourbilly.

Their parting was painful; for during the past year everything had concurred to strengthen the deep affection that united them. The long absence of M. de Chantal, the dangers to which he had been exposed, the wound received at Fontaine-Française, the noble and brilliant qualities he had displayed, but, above all, the devoted care lavished upon him by his young wife, riveted more closely the bonds that united them. It may be, too, that as the hour of trial drew near, God intensified the affection these two beautiful souls entertained for each other, that they might taste during the short period they were yet to be together all the happiness of which they were so deserving.

However the case may be, their biographers are unanimous in ascribing to this epoch a remarkable increase in their already great affection. One of the deponents at the process of the saint's canonization says: "At this time they gave so evident a proof of union of heart that they were looked upon as forming but one soul in two bodies." "During the year in which M. de Chantal was wounded," says another, "the venerable servant of God detained him several months at Bourbilly Castle, and the great affection they manifested for each other at that time excited the admiration of all their neighbors."[1]

But what proves still more truly this increase of affection is the fact that, after her husband's departure for the court, it actually created a kind of scruple in the conscience of the young Baroness.

Although she had already attained a high degree of virtue, Madame de Chantal had never yet been able so to moderate the joy her husband's presence caused her as to prevent its interfering with her pious practices. To the words "when

[1] Depositions of Mother Favre de Charmette and Sister Marie-Louise d'Allier.

the Baron de Chantal was at court, she devoted herself entirely to God; when he returned home, she devoted herself entirely to him," Bussy-Rabutin adds the following details: "When he returned, the joy of seeing him again, the pleasure she took in his company, and the desire to please and entertain him by opening her doors to guests, made her insensibly relax in her devotions, which, however, she again resumed on his next departure." Mother de Chaugy says the same: "When her dear husband returned, the perfect satisfaction she felt in his company made her forget her former devotions, and she no longer gave so much time to prayer."

Her happiness had never been so great as at the period now in question. Never before had she so completely yielded to its sweet influence, and it is probable that her exercises of devotion suffered more than usual. When, consequently, M. de Chantal had set out with Henry IV. and she returned to Bourbilly, and found herself again alone under its old trees surrounded by her little children, her poor, and her servants, her life, recollected and uniform, alternating between prayer and charity, made her reflect upon her tepidity in heavenly things during her husband's stay. She felt troubled, and resolved to take measures that her human affection should not militate against that due to God. "Having perceived," says one of the witnesses, "that whilst her husband was at home she had, in some way or other, forgotten certain practices of piety, since she was too much taken up with the pleasure caused by his presence, she made a firm resolution to be thenceforth faithful to the devotions she had imposed upon herself, whether her husband was at home or away."[1]

This resolution once taken, she began to put it into execution; and, as it always happens to those that unreservedly abandon themselves to grace, she was soon inundated with light and experienced ardent desires to belong to God. "As soon as the Baron was out of sight," she tells us, "I felt my heart drawn to give itself entirely to God. But, alas! I knew not how to profit by it, I did not recognize the grace God offered me. All my thoughts and prayers," she continues

[1] Deposition of Sister Marie-Aimée de Sonnaz, *super art.* xviii.

with charming ingenuousness, "turned upon the one subject —the preservation and return of my dear husband."

Whilst the remembrance of M. de Chantal thus occupied the heart of our saint even in the midst of her prayers and desires after the highest perfection, his thoughts amid the honors of the court were as constantly fixed upon her. The absence of the one whom he loved above all others cast a shade of sorrow over the splendid festivities, at which he assisted only in body. As he possessed "an excellent vein of poetry," he used to express his sadness in verses, which were long preserved by the first religious of the Visitation, but which are now lost. In the last couplet of one of these effusions he protests that the thought alone of the virtues of his holy wife filled his soul with contempt for the vanity and splendor of the court. It was probably due to this remembrance, as much as to his own noble character, that soon after his return to Paris he acted in a manner that alone would have sufficed to hand down his name with glory to the most remote posterity. Scarcely thirty-five years old, in the full flush of age and talent, he renounced the hope of becoming a Marshal of France, rather than obey an order that his conscience judged unjust.[1] He even left the court and returned to Bourbilly, there to console himself in the love of a saint for the loss of a dignity for which the world would have had him pay too dear.

A priceless recompense, particularly in the eyes of a Christian, was awaiting him. God was about to manifest to him in a wonderful manner the sanctity of his dear wife, and to crown her, young as she was, with the aureola of miracles.

[1] All contemporary writers are unanimous upon this point. "At the beginning of the year 1601," says Mother de Chaugy, "the Baron de Chantal withdrew from court, to avoid obeying an order that he considered unjust. If he had remained, he would have been made a Marshal of France, as much on account of his own merit as in compliment to his father-in-law, President Frémyot." (*Mémoires*, p. 23.) Père Fichet speaks in a similar manner (see *La Sainte Vie de la Mère de Chantal*, chap. vii.), as also Sister Marie-Philiberte de Monthouz (see her Deposition, *super art.* xix.). Sister Valentine de Bellair goes still farther, for she attributes his determination in this affair to the pious impression made upon him by his holy wife. (See her Deposition, *super art.* xix.)

It was the beginning of the winter of 1600, so sadly famous for the great famine that desolated the whole kingdom and particularly the province of Burgundy. Numbers of the poor died of hunger; and others, pale and haggard, dragged themselves along the highways plucking the wild herbs or disputing over the infectious carcass of some dead animal. Madame de Chantal, who had loved the poor from her earliest years, was moved with compassion. She announced that she would daily give bread and soup to all who should present themselves. They came from six leagues around, and crowded at the castle-gate. To maintain order in the distribution, M. de Chantal, at the solicitations of his wife, had a second gate opened into the courtyard, that the poor might enter by one and leave by the other. It sometimes happened that, after having received their share, they would hurry around the castle and re-enter to get another portion. The saint perceived this, but she never had the courage to humble them by a reproof. "My God," she used to say, "I am begging every moment at the door of Thy mercy. Would I like to be sent away the second or third time? Thou bearest with my importunity a thousand and a thousand times, and shall I not endure that of Thy creatures?"

Not satisfied with this manner of assisting the suffering, she in some measure transformed the castle into a hospital. With her husband's permission, she had a large number of beds prepared for the sick, particularly for poor mothers who, dying themselves of hunger, had not sufficient milk to nourish their babes. "During this period of scarcity and want," say several witnesses, "the said lady, actuated by her great charity, made all the nursing women of Bourbilly come with their infants and cradles to the castle, where she lodged them in a large room near St. Margaret's chapel. She was very attentive to make them say their prayers and to provide them with necessary nourishment. Not satisfied with this, she sent every day a pound of bread to each of the families of these women, for the support of their husbands and other children." [1]

[1] Process of Canonization: Deposition of the inhabitants of Bourbilly.

To aid in her charitable works, Madame de Chantal had hastily constructed in one of the outbuildings of the castle that "*oven for the poor*," which has existed even to the present day, an object of special veneration, and whose vast dimensions excite the astonishment and admiration of pilgrims. It was fifteen feet wide and could contain thirty bushels. But, although used only to bake bread for the poor—and there were four bakings every week—the assistance was often found insufficient.[1]

Famine engenders distrust, and some of the servants began to murmur among themselves at the imprudence of Madame de Chantal. The complaints, whispered at first, then less guarded, at length broke out when the moment came to dispose of the last of the provisions. Aroused by the representations of her domestics, who saw with consternation the stores diminishing, the young Baroness went herself to visit the granaries. There she found but one barrel of flour and a little rye. It was in the depth of winter, and the number of sufferers was daily increasing. Madame de Chantal raised her eyes to heaven, and, her heart full of holy confidence, she ordered the servants to draw freely from the little store and distribute generously to the poor. This was done for six months, and when summer had brought in new harvests, all flocked to gaze with wonder upon the little heap of flour that had never diminished.

This was our saint's first miracle. It is still talked of in the province that witnessed it. Mother de Chaugy says: "We had heard this fact spoken of as a real miracle, and having begged our blessed Mother to tell us how it happened, she related it precisely as we have given it, humbly adding that she always attributed the favor to the great virtue and

[1] Process of Canonization. The following paragraph testifies to the same fact: "And moreover, I, Notary-Apostolic, having, at the request of Lord Poussy, gone with the undersigned witnesses to the inner court of the said castle (of Bourbilly), the said Lord Poussy showed me an oven, whose capacity was about thirty bushels, it being about fifteen feet wide, which the said Delamaison and others, having previously made their declarations, assured me had been built by the said lady, Françoise Frémyot, for the purpose of baking bread for the poor, and in order to be able to give daily alms."

piety of one of her servants, Dame Jeanne, in whose prayers she had much confidence." [1]

St. Chantal's biographers mention only this one miracle; but the inquiry instituted for her canonization brought to light another of the same nature, though, perhaps, even more striking, which had occurred some time before. "At that time," says one of the witnesses, "during two years of scarcity and want, the said lady redoubled her ordinary benevolence and almsdeeds. Twice did she exhaust the provisions laid up in her granary. One day three or four beggars went to the said castle of Bourbilly to ask alms of the said lady, who told the said Margaret Potot, one of her servants, to get some grain from the usual place and give it to the poor. The said Potot having answered that there was no more, for she had swept the place the preceding evening, the said lady nevertheless insisted upon sending the said Potot to the place in question, and she, going in obedience, was very much surprised to find a quantity of grain, although she had left none there the evening before. This was a subject of wonder to the whole household and to the inhabitants of the said Bourbilly. And this the said Poutiot has heard, not only from Margaret Potot, servant of the said lady, but also from all the domestics of the said castle, as she used to go there often, because she lived in the sheepfold of the said castle." [2]

"Another deponent, the daughter-in-law of that Margaret Potot who witnessed the miracle, gives a similar account of it. She declares that she had heard Margaret Potot, her mother-in-law, say that, one day, Lady de Chantal having told her to go to the usual place for some grain for the poor who were at the castle-gate, she answered that there was no more, since she had, on the preceding evening, by the said lady's order, given all that remained to the poor. The said lady having replied, 'Go for the love of God,' the said Potot obeyed, and found in the said place, to her great surprise, a quantity of grain." [3]

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 19. Deposition of Mother Favre de Charmette, *super art.* xxiv.

[2] Process of Canonization: Deposition of the inhabitants of Bourbilly.

[3] *Id., ibid.*

Mother Favre de Charmette, also, attests the fact in her deposition. But she carefully distinguishes this miraculous multiplication of the grain from the multiplication of the flour, which took place later, and adds the important circumstance that, when Margaret Potot tried to open the door of the granary, she found it so full of grain that she could hardly get in. "I affirm," she adds, "that I heard these two miraculous facts from some old Visitandines to whom the domestics of the servant of God, themselves eye-witnesses of the two prodigies, had related them." [1]

How true it is that the testimony of saints is to be distrusted when they speak of themselves! These very years, signalized by the practice of heroic virtue and blessed by miracles like the above, we shall later find Madame de Chantal describing as years of dissipation, from which as long as she lives she will thank God for having drawn her through the ministry of St. Francis de Sales. "Before that," she says, "I used to pass my time without devotion, thinking only of observing the Commandments of God and the Church, of pleasing my husband, and of attending to my household." [2] She forgot her many virtues, her rare innocence, her fruitful charity, her generous sacrifices, or rather, she enhanced their merit and lustre by that very forgetfulness.

The great trial of her life came in the midst of this whole-souled consecration of herself to God by good works.

M. de Chantal fell dangerously ill, and the young Baroness then proved that religion, instead of stifling legitimate affections, does but intensify them by purifying them. Our saint became, so to speak, sick with her beloved husband. Seated by his bed, her heart sad, but her countenance bright, for fear of alarming him, she never left him day or night. At rare intervals, when he slept a little, she stole from his side to the chapel, where she was often found prostrate and bathed in tears. "Chantal was taken ill," says Bussy-Rabutin, "and his wife, who loved him most tenderly, passed the days at his pillow and the nights in the chapel." [3]

[1] Process of Canonization: Deposition of Mother Favre de Charmette.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy.

[3] Bussy-Rabutin: *Vie abrégée*, chap. i.

M. de Chantal bore his sufferings with Christian fortitude. The experience he had had of the false judgment of the world, the dangerous illness threatening his life in the flower of his age, the love of a saint who was winning his affections from earth, and the shadow of death hovering over him, all opened his mind to heavenly light. He felt the nothingness of the world, and his heart, detached by degrees from all things, aspired to the love of God alone. "These two souls, pure as two chaste doves," says one of the saint's biographers, "used to hold long conversations on the vanity of this life and the great happiness of serving God far from the noise of the world. The invalid, as if aware of his approaching end, with a more vivid idea of eternity, proposed that they should make a reciprocal promise to the effect that when death separated them, the survivor would consecrate the remainder of life to the service of God. But the young wife, unable to bear the thought of separation, always turned away from the subject." [1]

At length, M. de Chantal recovered. His strength returned, and he resumed his walks and hunting parties. Every one thought him far from the tomb; but, alas! he was even then nearer to it than ever.

Two singular dreams prepared his noble soul for the sacrifice God was about to demand. One night after his recovery, he dreamed that his coat had been dyed purple and that he was robed like a cardinal. Next morning he related his dream to his wife and, like a brave soldier, added that he would soon be wounded in battle and his clothes dyed in his blood. The saint laughed, and replied: "Well, really! And I dreamed that I was muffled in black crape, like a widow." Then, perceiving that her words were making an impression upon her husband, she added: "I think this dream came from my great anxiety during your illness, but I pay no attention to it." M. de Chantal made no reply, but raised his eyes toward heaven with a look of resignation.

Here let us pause to admire the delicate precautions taken by Almighty God to prepare this devoted couple for the

[1] De Maupas: *Vie de la Vénérable Mère de Chantal*, p. 3.

painful stroke about to separate them. He first permitted M. de Chantal to become the victim of injustice, in order to disenchant him with the world and the court. He afterward nailed him to a bed of sickness, in order to purify him by suffering, and led him to the portals of the tomb, as if to familiarize him with death. During this period of trial, his holy young wife was at his side. God willed that she should gaze upon her almost dying husband, that her thoughts might be gradually turned to the possibility of losing him, and that she might learn in advance the science of resignation, of which she would soon have need. Meanwhile, He was purifying their hearts, ennobling their souls, and filling them with light and strength, with detachment from earthly things and from each other, with a ready and entire submission to the divine will, to the end that, when the terrible stroke should have fallen, they might both be prepared, he to return to God, and she to remain on earth, but nailed to the Cross, and finding in her sorrow a new and more sublime fecundity.

Soon after the incident of the two dreams, M. d'Anlezy, Lord of Chazelles, one of their neighbors and a relative and intimate friend of M. de Chantal, came to Bourbilly to congratulate him on his recovery.[1] A hunting party was proposed and eagerly accepted; for the Baron was very fond of this kind of exercise, and since his recovery had frequently indulged in it. The two friends started early in the morning, accompanied by some servants. The place chosen for the hunt was not far from the castle. After passing the drawbridge, the huntsmen had only to climb the rather steep ascent of a little hill,[2] to gain a large wood intersected by vast avenues, and in some places half filled with brushwood. Thither the game collected to gambol at sunrise. Having gained one of these avenues, the two friends, leaving the servants at some distance behind, commenced to advance slowly, following the opposite borders of a glade. They

[1] Anlezy is a village of Nièvre, the seigniory of which has since passed to the Damas. Baron de Chantal's mother was a daughter of Charles de Cossay and Anne d'Anlezy.

[2] This hill is called, in the provincial dialect, *La Molaige*, that is to say, *lieu mal aisé*—difficult to ascend.

carried their arquebuses loaded, primed, and cocked, ready to fire at the first sight of game.

Suddenly a shot was heard, a cry resounded, and M. de Chantal fell to the ground bathed in his own blood.[1]

It has never been known exactly how the accident happened. Did a branch catch M. d'Anlezy's arquebuse and discharge it in his hand? Did M. de Chantal wear that day a jacket the color of which, seen through the brushwood, led his friend to suppose it was a hind under covert? Be that as it may, the shot was mortal. The thigh was broken and several balls lodged deep in the hip.

"I am a dead man," exclaimed M. de Chantal as he fell. "My friend, my cousin, I pardon you with all my heart. Your shot was accidental."

But the unfortunate d'Anlezy heard nothing, he was distracted with grief. He ran about like a madman, crying aloud, invoking death, and seeking to turn his own weapons against himself.

"Cousin, my dear friend," cried the dying man, "the shot was directed by Heaven, before it left your hand. Sin not, I entreat you. Think of God, remember that you are a Christian;" and whilst thus speaking he fixed upon his unhappy friend a look full of forgiveness.

Meanwhile, the attendants came running up. On seeing M. de Chantal, they burst into tears and lost all self-command. He alone preserved his presence of mind. After he had been conveyed to a house[2] in the village, he sent at once for a priest; and that there might be no delay, he despatched four of his attendants to four different parishes, that, if they did not find the curé in one, they might do so in another. A fifth messenger was sent to Madame de Chantal.

"But, ah!" said the Baron, with tears in his eyes, "do not let her know that I am mortally wounded. Say only that I am wounded in the thigh."

The young Baroness had been lately confined and was

[1] The spot upon which the Baron de Chantal was shot is still pointed out in the woods called *Vic*.

[2] This house is still standing. It is the last in the village, almost at the entrance of the above-named woods.

still in bed when the servant reached the castle. She read the bad news in his troubled glance.

"Ah!" she said, "they are gilding the pill for me," and dressing hastily, she set out with a throbbing heart. As soon as M. de Chantal caught sight of her, he exclaimed: "Dearest, the decree of Heaven is just. I must love it and die."

"No, no," she replied, "we must try to cure you."

"It will be in vain," said the wounded man in a low voice, for he felt that he was dying.

At these words Madame de Chantal, who, in spite of her apprehensions, had formed no idea of the extent of her misfortune, burst into sobs. Reproaches against the unhappy friend who had caused the accident were mingled with her sobs and lamentations.

"Ah!" said her dying husband, interrupting her, "let us honor Divine Providence, let us look upon this stroke in a holier light."

Then, with that calmness which virtue alone can impart, he asked whether the priest had arrived. On being answered in the affirmative, he at once made his confession. Meanwhile, physicians came from all quarters. The Baroness, "between hope and fear," went from one to the other, trying to read in their eyes her husband's fate, and, as if nothing could resist her love, she would say to them:

"Gentlemen, you *must* cure M. de Chantal."

"If it please not the Heavenly Physician," said the Baron, smiling, "they can do nothing."

Madame de Chantal was so beside herself, and she urged the physicians with such earnestness to save her husband, that they, fearing to hasten his death, dared not extract the balls. They merely dressed the wound and removed him to the castle. His agony lasted nine days. On the fifth day the slight hope they had cherished vanished. The fever raged, but, in spite of his cruel sufferings, M. de Chantal retained perfect consciousness and had no delirium. He lay upon his bed of pain, awaiting death with the coolness of a soldier, or rather, watching for its advent with the gentle and courageous resignation of a Christian. His virtues on the approach of death shone with greater lustre and

excited the admiration of all who witnessed them. The name of his unfortunate friend was ever on his lips, coupled with words of fervent faith.

"I pardon him freely," he would say. "He shot me accidentally; but I have knowingly wounded Jesus Christ to death;" and whilst so saying he gazed on the Crucifix with inexpressible devotion.

As his end drew nigh, faith and divine love filled his soul with contempt of earthly things. Struck down in the flower of his age, violently bereft of all that can render life attractive, torn from the affection of an incomparable wife and four little children, he forgot all, to think only of the happiness of doing the holy will of God. He consoled his weeping friends, and, with a fervor that bore testimony to the sincerity of his detachment, he exhorted his wife to resignation.

But such was the grief of Madame de Chantal that she found it almost impossible to utter her *fiat*. It would not leave her lips. She frequently rushed sobbing from her husband's room, and running through the corridors and apartments of the castle, would cry aloud:

"Lord, take all that I have in the world, but leave me my dear husband!"

Almighty God, whose adorable designs the following pages will reveal, had decreed that these pure and fervent prayers should not be granted. He had vouchsafed to M. de Chantal a presentiment of his death; consequently, from the very first, although the physicians were full of hope, he insisted upon arranging his affairs and receiving the Last Sacraments. On the eighth day, the eve of his death, he received Holy Viaticum "with the fervor of a religious," forgave d'Anlezy for the last time, and had this pardon recorded in the parish register, that his children and grandchildren might never lose sight of it. He also added a clause to his will, by which he disinherited that one of his children who would speak of avenging his death. After this, free from anxiety, his heart detached from earth and already full of that heaven into which he was so soon to enter, he slept the sleep of the just. He was thirty-five years and some months old.

We shall not attempt to describe the state into which this

death threw Madame de Chantal. An old biographer says: "It would take the mingled tints of love and sorrow to portray so lamentable a grief." [1] Our readers who have followed us step by step sufficiently know the tenderness and ardor of her loving heart to understand the depth of affliction and bitter agony into which the snapping of ties so strong must have cast her. She wept her spouse "with floods of incomparable tears." She who in the absence of her husband would see no one; she who used to say, "The eyes I desire to please are a hundred leagues from here," now, that those eyes were closed in death, withdrew into the closest retirement. Her castle did not seem to her secluded enough. She would often steal away to weep alone in a little wood at some distance.[2] In vain did the ladies of the neighboring castles, in vain did her aunts and cousins from Semur, come to Bourbilly, in the hope of consoling her. She was grateful for their kindness; but, in the evening, when she retired to her room, she would say: "Ah! why do they not leave me to weep as I will? They wish to relieve me, and they torture me." And then, casting herself on her knees, she would pass the night in tears. "The grief of our holy widow," says Bussy-Rabutin, "and the efforts she made to repress it, reduced her to such a state of emaciation that she was no longer recognizable. Perceiving that she always passed the night on her knees, praying and weeping, they were obliged to watch her, in order to keep her, at least, in bed." [3] "Such was the violence of her grief," says M. de Marigny, "that, at the end of three or four months, Madame de Chantal had become a skeleton, and they began to fear for her life." [4] Whoever had seen her at this time might have thought her very unhappy. And, indeed, she was as wretched as any one on earth could be. In her heart was one of those wounds that, in great souls, never heal.

[1] De Maupas: *Vie de la Vénérable Mère de Chantal*, p. 27.

[2] The wood of Garenne, facing the entrance of the castle, and which still exists.

[3] Bussy-Rabutin: *Vie abrégée*, chap. ii.

[4] Second manuscript of Mother Louise-Dorothée de Marigny, *Procès de Canonisation*, vol. ii. p. 974.

But her very unhappiness was for her the germ of a new life. "From that sorrow, which she felt excessively but bore heroically," says Bussy-Rabutin,[1] "she was to draw strength, light, supernatural fervor, absolute detachment from creatures, and, in fine, that death to self, that entire abandonment to God, which were to make her in His hands the instrument for things so great."

[1] *Vie abrégée*, chap. ii.

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST YEAR OF WIDOWHOOD.—WISHING TO SERVE GOD MORE FERVENTLY, MADAME DE CHANTAL SEEKS A DIRECTOR.

1601—1602.

Madame de Chantal became a widow at the age of twenty-eight. After having enjoyed the rare happiness of possessing a husband worthy of her, a cruel accident had torn him from her. Of the six children with whom God had blessed their marriage, two had died in infancy. The four that survived their father were a son five years of age and three girls younger still, the third being scarcely three weeks old. The affliction of the widow was increased by the anxiety of the mother. The present overwhelmed her on account of her loneliness; the future alarmed her because of its responsibility. These are the great sorrows of life, sorrows with which none others can be compared, and before which all human consolation falls powerless. God, who esteems a soul capable of bearing so heavy a cross, can alone assist her to carry it. He alone can dry such tears; He alone can heal such wounds.

It was not long before Madame de Chantal experienced this. Consolations unknown to those that have never suffered suddenly mingled with her bitterest griefs. Heavenly lights filled her mind. She felt the most ardent desire to give up everything, to consecrate herself entirely to God. "The attractions that I received from Our Lord," she said, "were so powerful that I would have left everything and retired into a desert, there to serve God entirely and perfectly without any exterior hindrance; and I think had not the thought of my four little children withheld me, I would have secretly fled to the Holy Land, there to end my days." [1]

[1] *Mémoires* of her own life, written by St. Chantal herself in a blank-book of about twenty pages, and kept in the archives of Annecy.

But this heavenly light was not of continued duration. From the heights to which faith transported her, she would often fall back into the darkness and desolation of her widowhood. Why had God taken from her so dear a husband? Why had He severed a union which, far from diverting her from the road to heaven, did but lead her onward? Why, above all, deprive her four little ones of a father of whom they had so great need? Madame de Chantal saw, though obscurely, that the terrible stroke veiled some design of God. But those glimmerings were too uncertain always to protect her against the sadness and discouragement of her position. Thus did she fluctuate between joy and sorrow.[1] Sometimes, calm and recollected, she would exclaim with a feeling of ineffable peace: "God does everything in mercy;" and an instant after, her eyes swimming in tears, she would begin again those endless *whys* and *wherefores* of grief, to which no answer can be given. This mingling of light and darkness produced in her a state of mind impossible to describe. She herself said that she never would have thought that any one could be so happy and at the same time so miserable.[2]

In the midst of her troubles, however, Madame de Chantal was not inactive. Her faith and her natural energy forbade that. Scarcely had she recovered from the first shock of grief, when she recalled the pious conversations held with her husband during his last illness, and, as a proof of her fidelity to him and wishing to give her heart entirely to God, she made a vow of perpetual chastity. In consequence of this vow, she distributed to the poor all M. de Chantal's wardrobe and much of her own worn during their earthly union. She retained not even the ornaments received at her marriage, but gave them to the church, desiring, as she said, nothing but the nuptial robe required for the wedding-feast of the Lamb. It was, also, at this period that she made the vow to devote the labor of her hands to the altar and the poor, which she considered a twofold manner of

[1] Bussy-Rabutin: *Vie abrégée*, chap. ii.

[2] Bussy-Rabutin: *Vie abrégée*, chap. ii. *Mémoires* written by St. Chantal.

clothing Jesus Christ. She diminished the expenses of her household, and dismissed some of her servants after having liberally recompensed them. She regulated the employment of her time, resolving to spend in prayer, reading, more frequent visits to the poor and sick, and above all in educating her children, those hours that, to please her husband, she had formerly devoted to the chase, to cards, and to society.

In order to lead a life thus entirely consecrated to God, Madame de Chantal felt the need of a director to conduct her along the path of piety, always so difficult in the midst of the world. Her prayer, up to this time frequent, but very simple, now became more elevated. She experienced union with God so intimate as to startle her. At certain moments she felt herself transported into higher regions of which she had never dreamed. At length, when miraculous visions mingled with her ardent love for God, she became alarmed, and, understanding that it was impossible to advance on such a path without a guide, her only thought was to find one.

Madame de Chantal's desires were as impetuous as her character; consequently, her longing for a director soon gave her no rest. "Alas!" she used afterward to say, "I wanted a director, and I did not know for what I was asking; for, although reared by pious people and my course of action proper, yet I had never heard of a director, a spiritual guide, or anything of the kind. But God so filled my heart with this desire, and the inspiration to ask of Him a director was so strong, that I prayed for it with singular earnestness and importunity. I used to talk to Our Lord as if I saw Him with my corporal eyes, so great was the hope inspired by my faith and vehement desire of being heard." Later on she adds the following words, which fully depict her character: "When walking alone, I used, as if transported, say aloud to Our Lord, 'My God, I conjure Thee by the truth and fidelity of Thy promises to give me for spiritual guide a truly holy man, one of Thy servants, who may teach me Thy will and all Thou desirest of me, and I promise and swear in Thy holy presence to do whatever he may tell me as coming from Thee.' In fact, everything that a heart wrung with grief and urged by vehement desire could invent I said to

Our Lord, to move Him to grant my petition."[1] Not content with her own prayers, she solicited those of the poor, of widows, orphans, and little children, of the grief-stricken and the innocent, and she distributed abundant alms for this intention.

Some of our readers will, perhaps, be astonished that Madame de Chantal, whose piety was so great, and who had already been honored with the gift of miracles, had never yet met a director. But it is because there is an immense difference between a confessor and a director. The confessor receives the avowal of the penitent, absolves him from his sins, and counsels him as to what is necessary for the purification of his soul. There his mission ends. That of the director is of a different nature and extends farther. Hence, confessors are to be found everywhere. God multiplies them, because all souls stand in need of them. But such is not the case as regards directors. They must be wrung, as it were, from His bounty.

When in a city or village certain souls, called to the practice of great virtues or to the accomplishment of great works, have long prayed and wept for a guide, God looks down upon their tears, and from His look of love is born a director. He is a creation apart. Directors issue from the Heart of God as great Doctors or great Pontiffs from His love for the Church. But their glory is more hidden; it rejoices only the eyes of angels. Buried in the obscurity of a confessional, unknown to men, incapable sometimes of wielding a pen or delivering a discourse, they make no noise in the world. Their voice is heard only as a gentle wind.[2] But this gentle wind has often more power, it sometimes sows the seeds of more virtues, than the voice of great orators. O triumph of humility and grace! They call no one, and yet crowds run after them. What is the divine light that reveals to souls this obscure confessional? They flock thither from all parts. They unveil their conscience, and, enraptured at being so quickly understood, so fully consoled, and so wisely directed, they say to themselves: "Ah! how God loves souls in giving them directors so holy!"

[1] *Mémoires*, written by St. Chantal.

[2] "*And I heard the voice as it were of a gentle wind.*"—Job iv. 16.

"Happy they who find them!" says Fénelon. "Let them return thanks for the gift and profit by it. Upright souls, it is to you that God will give them. Your prayers shall call them into existence. God will form them expressly for the designs He has over you."[1]

Never, perhaps, has God formed directors so eminent and so holy as in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, because no period had need of greater remedies. No other epoch, it is certain, ever witnessed in the midst of a frightful tempest souls so holy, works so powerful, and a regeneration so striking and extensive. Nearly all the great men of that period, whether priests, religious, or bishops, were skilful directors: St. Francis de Sales and St. Vincent de Paul, Père de Condren and M. Olier, Cardinal de Berulle and M. André Duval, Blessed Pierre Fourrier and St. Francis Regis. God multiplied them, and still they were too few. "O my God," exclaims Fénelon, "if I dare complain of Thee, the only thing I would reproach Thee for is, that Thou givest not to Thy Church a sufficient number of directors." The great Bishop knew that, to save the world, above all at certain critical moments to snatch it from perdition and restore it to God, neither the labor of apostles, nor the learning of theologians, nor the tears of penitents, nor the lamentations of virgins, suffice. The work calls for the additional help of the humble and effective coöperation of holy directors. It is they who form in the secrecy of the confessional the great souls appointed to regenerate the world.

Madame de Chantal was called to virtue too sublime, she was destined to act too distinguished a part in the Church, for God not to prepare a director for her. And, in fact, He had in reserve for her one of the highest order; but as St. Teresa, before meeting St. Peter of Alcantara, had vainly sought for eighteen years what she so aptly named "a spiritual master," Madame de Chantal was, also, to purchase, by several years of waiting, longing, and trial, the happiness of being directed by St. Francis de Sales.

She had, however, even at this epoch a glimpse of the guide who was being prepared for her. One morning whilst

[1] Letter on Spiritual Direction.

at Bourbilly, after crossing the fields on horseback, praying all the time that God would make known to her him who was to direct her, for this thought never left her mind, she was riding along a broad road that skirted a wood, when, suddenly, she perceived not far off, at the foot of a little hill, a man whose features were entirely unknown to her, and who looked like a Bishop. He wore a black cassock, a rochet, and a bonnetcarré. His countenance was angelic, his whole appearance heavenly. Whilst Madame de Chantal was gazing at him with fixed attention, she heard a voice saying to her: "Behold the guide beloved by God and men, into whose hands thou must commit thy conscience." She sought in vain to discover who this holy personage might be. She had never before seen him. But her heart was filled with joy, and she doubted not that she would soon meet him.[1]

Almost precisely at the same hour, St. Francis de Sales, whilst praying in the chapel of Sales Castle, was rapt in ecstasy, during which he beheld a young widow, of whose name he was ignorant and whose face he had never before seen. He was at a loss how to interpret the vision, when suddenly the veil of the future was drawn aside, and he saw, as it were, the beginning of a religious Congregation, of which this young widow was to be the Mother and he himself the Founder.[2]

These visions were accompanied by such a flood of spiritual light, that later on when St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal met for the first time, in Dijon, they recognized each other. A similar instance happened in the solitude of Thebaid when the two patriarchs of the desert, St. Paul and St. Antony, saluted each other by name, though having never

[1] The spot upon which St. Chantal had this vision is still shown. It is on the road leading from Bourbilly to the mill belonging to the castle, at an almost equal distance from each, at the extremity of a small wood, now called *Bois Thomas.*

[2] These two visions, with which St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal had been favored, were seriously and rigorously inquired into during the process of canonization of both saints. In both cases a large number of auricular witnesses was sworn, and their unanimous depositions admit not the slightest doubt of the two events having occurred.

before met. And in times less remote, St. Dominic and St. Francis Assisi, impelled by a presentiment of their common vocation, cast themselves on their first meeting into each other's arms.

Meanwhile Madame de Chantal's grief increased. Her health failed. President Frémyot, hearing of her state, wrote reproaching her severely for thus yielding to her feelings, reminding her that she ought to live for her four little children, and requiring her to leave Bourbilly and return to Dijon, for a few months at least. He hoped that the excitement of city life and the society of her relatives and friends would in some degree alleviate her bitter sorrow. She obeyed without delay, and reached Dijon about the end of March, 1602. There she met some of her early friends, the pious and warm-hearted Madame Bruslard; Madame de Villers, one of those charming souls who seem created only to make virtue loved; and Mademoiselle de Xaintonges, the courageous Foundress of the Ursulines of Dijon. It was with this circle of intimate friends, with her venerable father, "who tenderly loved his daughter and who was as tenderly loved by her;"[1] her excellent uncle, M. Claude Frémyot; with Madame de Berbisey and Madame des Barres, each of whom had been like a mother to her, that, in seclusion from the world, the first year of her widowhood was finished. They who have suffered much know how sweet is such a solitude broken only by the presence of friends who understand their sorrow and echo their sighs.

But Madame de Chantal did not confide to them all her troubles. Those that arose from the state of her conscience, from her desire to find a director, she revealed to no one. The vision she had seen on the little hill at Bourbilly had increased rather than diminished her impatience. The words, "Behold the guide beloved by God and men, into whose hands thou must intrust thy conscience," never left her mind. But where was he? How should she find him? In what church, in what chapel was this saint? For his countenance was so angelic that she felt sure he was not only a saint, but a very great one. Full of these thoughts,

[1] Bussy-Rabutin: *Vie abrégée*, chap. ii.

she visited again and again all the churches, chapels, and shrines, then so numerous in Dijon, praying, weeping, everywhere seeking that mysterious guide, hoping to meet him at every step, and always returning home distressed, dejected, and ready to yield to discouragement. Her troubles increased with the earnestness of her search, and, to use the expression of one of her biographers, she importuned Heaven with her lamentations.[1]

About two leagues from Dijon, on the side of a steep mountain, was a chapel celebrated throughout Burgundy and dedicated to Notre-Dame-d'Étang. One day Madame de Chantal met there a priest belonging to the Friars-Minim, who, through devotion, had gone thither with some pious ladies of the city to celebrate Mass. As Madame de Chantal already enjoyed a high reputation for piety, these ladies accosted her, and commenced one of those pious conversations that naturally arise on pilgrimages. Among other things, they spoke of direction and directors, either because Madame de Chantal gave utterance to the thoughts that were ever uppermost in her mind, or because the conversation turned of itself on this topic, as it too often happens among devout people. These good ladies were under the direction of the Minim Father, and they praised him so highly that Madame de Chantal resolved to open her heart to him. She saw, at once, that he was not the person who had been shown to her and of whom it had been said: "Behold the guide into whose hands thou must intrust thy conscience." But, on the one hand, her temptations were increasing to such a degree that it seemed impossible for her to remain longer without a director; and, on the other, she was troubled by occasional fears lest the figure she had seen was an illusion, a ruse of the evil one, to prevent her choosing a guide, without whom it was evident she could not advance further. In her anxiety, all things having been maturely considered, she asked after a fervent prayer to speak with the Father. The interview took place after Mass, and in that little chapel of Notre-Dame-d'Étang commenced for her a new and terrible trial. But cruel as was

[1] *Vie de la Mère de Chantal*, by P. Fichet, chap. viii.

the pain of her new position, it had one good effect: it increased her desire to have a real director and prepared her to appreciate the meekness, moderation, prudence, and wise tardiness in deciding which characterized St. Francis de Sales, the guide in store for her.

The priest whose unskilful direction cost Madame de Chantal two years and a half of intense suffering was, however, learned and pious. All contemporary writers confirm this statement, and the holy Bishop of Geneva himself commends the good done by him in Dijon.[1] But it may happen, by a particular design of Almighty God, that the same individual may direct some souls very judiciously and fail in the direction of others. Such was the present case. No sooner had Madame de Chantal revealed the state of her soul to this pious priest, than he encouraged her inclination for corporal austerities. Instead of restraining her, he permitted her fasts, disciplines, night vigils, for all of which she was unfit in the state of exhaustion to which her husband's death, her grief, and anxiety of conscience had reduced her. Struck by her energy and fervor, he likewise imposed upon her a number of vocal prayers, meditations, very laborious practices, very long and serious exercises, which wearied the head and fatigued the mind. This was adding error to error. The good Father either did not understand Madame de Chantal's character, or he forgot one of the fundamental principles in the direction of souls. It is the indolent and cowardly who are to be animated, spurred on, as it were, by such means; the ardent and the impetuous ought, on the contrary, to be calmed and gradually withdrawn from the multitudinous exercises in which they are anxiously wandering without advancing. This is an essential principle, as we shall see later, admirably understood and practised by St. Francis de Sales.

It was impossible for Madame de Chantal not to suffer acutely on entering a way so unsuited to her nature. Did

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, chap. xi.; De Maupas: *Vie de Sainte Chantal,* chap. xi. Both affirm that he was learned and pious.—*Lettres de Saint François de Sales:* see the one dated June 14, 1604.—In his *Vie abrégée* Bussy-Rabutin says: "This director, a man otherwise full of piety . . . "

her fears and uneasiness redouble from the very commencement of her new career? Did her director perceive springing up in her regret for having placed herself under his guidance and the desire to leave him? Whatever it may have been, finding her always agitated, and persuaded that obedience alone could put an end to troubles of whose cause he was ignorant, he exacted of her four vows. The first was to obey him; the second, to keep as an inviolable secret all that he might say to her; the third, never to withdraw from his direction; and the fourth, never to confer with any one else about the state of her soul. The biographers of our saint treat this subject very briefly. They seem to think that these vows were required of her all at the same time, and that on the day upon which she first saw him. But this is not probable. He must have imposed them upon her a little later and successively, strengthening, as it were, one by the other, just as the chains of a prisoner are fastened more securely at every effort he makes to escape from them.

This manner of proceeding manifested neither moderation nor prudence nor knowledge of Madame de Chantal's character, nor a just appreciation of the circumstances in which she then was and of the troubles engendered by them. Let us, however, guard against pronouncing this singular direction the effect of human weakness and ignorance. The hand of God governs all things. Soon He will reveal to St. Francis de Sales the true way by which Madame de Chantal was to be guided; but now He permits her confessor's eyes to be veiled that she might pass through doubts and darkness, in order to be prepared for the grand direction He held in reserve for her. Such was the opinion given later by the holy Bishop of Geneva: "It was God," he wrote, "who submitted you to this first direction, proper for your good at that time." [1] St. Teresa, who, as we have remarked, had been subjected to a trial almost similar, considered it in the same light. "I recognize," she wrote in the latter years of her life, "that it was by the special providence of Almighty God that for eighteen years I found

[1] Letter of St. Francis de Sales, Oct. 14, 1604.

no spiritual master." [1] All is divine (let us not forget it) in the conduct of certain souls. It is God who sends them a director, and it is He, also, who sometimes permits them not to find one. In both cases, His manner of acting, if well understood, challenges our admiration.

Madame de Chantal passed two years and some months under this direction so little suited to her, suffering much, always disquieted, tortured in every sense of the word, but resigned, obedient "as a meek lamb," "so submissive and respectful that she would not have omitted complying with an iota of his injunctions." In this severe school, she learned to forget self and to will only what God willed. She came out of the crucible, as we shall see, renewed and strengthened, ready to profit by the direction of St. Francis de Sales, so true it is that all concurs to the good of those that love God.

Meanwhile the vacation of the Burgundian Parliament having commenced, President Frémyot went, as usual, to spend some months at Thotes, in Auxois. Madame de Chantal also left Dijon with her father, and returned to Bourbilly, whither duty was calling her. It was harvest time, and preparations were to be made for the vintage. The sight of the spot that had witnessed her joys and her sorrows drew from her fresh torrents of tears. Her attraction toward a holier life was increased by solitude, and her desire for a director became more intense. One day, whilst absorbed in prayer before a picture of the Blessed Virgin in the castle chapel, and begging God to make known to her His will, suddenly at the moment of greatest fervor she beheld herself surrounded by an innumerable multitude of virgins and widows, and heard a voice from heaven saying to her: "This is the generation which shall be given to thee and to My faithful servant; a generation chaste and elect, and I will that it be holy." Although Madame de Chantal comprehended nothing of this vision, she retained a pleasing remembrance of it which for some time alleviated her troubles.[2]

[1] *Œuvres de Sainte Thérèse*, by Père Bouix, vol. i. pp. 43, 44. Translated from the original manuscripts.

[2] This incident is related by St. Chantal herself in the manuscript

Whilst matters were in this state, she received a letter, which she could not read without a pang. Her father-in-law, the Baron de Chantal, who lived at Monthelon Castle, a league from Autun, wrote to her that he was growing old, and that he wished her to come and take up her abode with him.

Madame de Chantal's knowledge of the old Baron's character, of the disorder of his household and the still greater irregularity of his conduct, discovered to her at once the bitterness of the chalice that she would have to drink. But the hope of turning him from his evil course and of preparing him for a Christian death silenced every feeling of repugnance. "She did not hesitate," says one of her old biographers. "She received her father-in-law's command in a spirit of obedience, and uniting her heart to this cross, went with her four children to reside with him during a purgatory of about seven years and a half." [1]

Her last days at Bourbilly were marked by charitable deeds never forgotten by the inhabitants, and to which they deposed under oath at the process of her canonization. "When Lady de Chantal left Bourbilly for Monthelon," says one deponent, "she distributed to the poor before her departure all the grain and other effects in the said castle; and, at the said time, three orphan girls, named Fondardes, belonging to the village of Corcelles, being on their way to solicit alms of the said lady, were detained on the road, on account of the sufferings caused them by the rigorous weather. The said lady having heard of it, sent some one to meet them, and, having had them brought to her, she provided places for two of them before her departure, and the third she took with her in her carriage." "At the time of the departure of the said lady," say two other witnesses, "numbers of poor people, widows, orphans, and others, weeping and lamenting most piteously, followed her carriage crying out that they were losing their good mother." [2]

Mémoires mentioned above; and in the *Procès de Canonisation*, vol. ii. p. 24, the deposition of Claude-Louis Déquoex, Prior of the monastery of Talloires, attests the same fact. Other deponents do the same.

[1] De Maupas: *Vie de la Vénérable Mère de Chantal*, p. 40.

[2] Process of Canonization: Deposition of the inhabitants of Bourbilly.

They did, indeed, lose her, for Madame de Chantal never again resided at Bourbilly. She returned sometimes to superintend the harvest or vintage, but her visits were short. She transferred the property to her son, and after his death to her granddaughter, Mademoiselle Marie de Chantal, who, after she had become the Marchioness de Sévigné, found the site somewhat forbidding, and "went there," as she said, "but rarely, and only to bore herself." [1] Shortly after, the castle passed out of the family and, at last, was entirely deserted. The large trees of the avenue, which Madame de Sévigné had had trimmed, disappeared; the towers fell; the moat was filled up with rubbish; and the river, checked in its course, receded from the walls of the castle. But, fortunately, there is a harmony between the lives of the saints and the places in which they have lived that survives even the ravages of time.

On leaving Semur and journeying for two or three hours through the rich and monotonous plains of Auxois, a sudden and steep turn in the road brings unexpectedly before the eyes of the traveller a fertile meadow, not very large, but presenting a pleasing, though lonely, aspect, in whose centre stand the ruins of an old castle. This is Bourbilly. An air of peace and recollection reigns around. Scarcely is the far-off murmur of the river heard as it flows by. A circlet of hillocks, covered with woods, surrounds the site, veiling it with a curtain of verdure and shutting out the din of the world beyond. It seems a spot prepared by God for the chaste joys of a Christian marriage, one of those sweet nests spoken of by St. Francis de Sales, closed toward earth and open only toward heaven! It seems a solitude expressly created in which to forget the world in a great love, or to weep in a great sorrow.

Two buildings, parallel and apart, the remains of the castle, are still standing in the middle of the valley. In one of them is a large Gothic window, in the style of the fourteenth century, with not a single pane of glass left, and through whose broken bars a glimpse is caught of the wheat piled up beyond. This was the chapel. In the other build-

[1] Letter of Madame de Sévigné to Bussy-Rabutin.

ing, a little more modern in style, may be seen the large apartments with their wainscoting and huge fireplaces ornamented with armorial bearings, in which the saint dwelt, and in which, for eight years, she had been the charming companion of M. de Chantal. On the ground-floor are the immense kitchens in which she shared the labor of her servants and received the poor. There, too, is the old flight of steps, now broken and disjointed, so often ascended and descended by her, and before the door are still standing some of the grand old oaks under whose shady branches she loved, like St. Bernard of old, to walk alone, her body on earth, but her soul in heaven. None but a Christian can form an idea of the ineffable charm the soul experiences in visiting places in which saints have lived. He feels, so to speak, less distant from those sublime beings. They seem to have bequeathed something of their spirit to the spots that witnessed their virtues, like those flowers that communicate their perfume to all that they touch. It is, perhaps, an illusion, but the pilgrim catches himself indulging the thought that, whilst he is wandering through the ruins of their earthly habitations, they are smiling upon him from heaven, and to their smiles he attributes the sweet emotions that fill his soul.

CHAPTER V.

MONTHELON.—NEW TRIALS OF MADAME DE CHANTAL.—ST. FRANCIS DE SALES PREACHES THE LENT AT DIJON.—ST. FRANCIS DE SALES AS A DIRECTOR.

It was toward the close of 1602 that Madame de Chantal and her four children arrived at Monthelon. The castle was older and more gloomy-looking than that of Bourbilly, lying, as it did, buried in the earth and surrounded on all sides by towers and a deep moat. The old Baron de Chantal had incurred too great a debt in embellishing Bourbilly to think of the restoration of Monthelon. When he fixed his residence there, in 1592, after his son's marriage, he contented himself with having sculptured, above the main entrance, the arms of his family, with his grand ribbon of the Order of St. Michael, and the following device in both Latin and French: "*Virtus vulnere virescit. La vertu s'accroît par les plaies*,"—Valor increases with wounds. When we recall the sorrowful years passed by the Baroness de Chantal in this castle, the humiliation she there underwent, and the wonderful progress she there made in virtue, our eyes fill with tears at sight of this inscription, still in existence. It reads to us like a prophecy.

The old Baron de Chantal, who was to be for our saint the cause of so intense suffering, was not wanting in good qualities. He was open-hearted, disinterested, and brave. He had distinguished himself in the army, and won the esteem and even the affection of Henry IV. But he was possessed of puerile vanity hurtful to his dignity, and violence of temper that marred his fortune. Vanity flowed in his blood. It was the hereditary disease of the Rabutins. Let us listen to Count de Bussy, one of the most conceited scions of a vain stock, joking about the numerous devices with which the Christophes and the Guys had tapestried

Bourbilly Castle. "I went there with the rest of the family, who were as proud of belonging to this noble house as myself," he wrote to Madame de Sévigné. "On beholding so many escutcheons, the living Rabutins esteem themselves still more highly, knowing thereby the great account the dead Rabutins made of their family. But we all burst into laughter when we saw old Christophe on his knees. Not satisfied with having had his coat of arms painted in a thousand places and in a thousand different ways, he had gone so far as to have made for himself a coat of them. You will readily believe, my fair cousin, that Christophe had a seal and that his arms were upon his plate, as well as upon the housing of his horses and his carriage. As for me, I would lay my life upon it." This old Christophe, whose coat was speckled over with armorials, was the father of our old Baron; and the latter, formed in such a school, had but too well profited by his training.

The violence of his temper was, perhaps, even greater than his vanity. It had involved him in a series of lawsuits, duels, and rash adventures, which made him the terror of the neighborhood. In consequence of one of them, he had been outlawed and condemned to death as guilty of two murders. He escaped punishment only under favor of the wars of the League, during which he nobly expiated his fault. Age, instead of mollifying, had given another turn to his violence of character. His continual whims and bursts of rage made all around him tremble.

As meekness is allied with fortitude in the saints, so, by a just judgment of God, do we always see violence attended by weakness. This passionate old man, before whom every one was forced to bend, had himself fallen under the sway of a servant-woman, without whose consent he scarcely dared move. She not only domineered over the master of the castle, where she had installed herself with her four children, but she acted as its mistress.[1] Every one saw that she was wasting the Baron's substance, every one complained of it, and some even ventured to draw his attention

[1] Process of Canonization: Depositions of Sisters de Leschereine and Grandis, *super art.* liv.—Manuscript *Mémoires* of Sister Angélique de la Croix.

to it, but, as is always the case under similar circumstances, the old Baron was blind to it all and wished to hear nothing of it.

Hardly had Madame de Chantal arrived at Monthelon when her experienced eye took in matters at a glance. She possessed in too high a degree the qualities of a good housekeeper not to perceive that her father-in-law's substance was being squandered. She attempted a remark on the subject; but her words met an ungracious reception. Displeased at the presence of our saint and fearful of being dismissed by her, the servant had already prejudiced the old Baron's mind against his daughter-in-law. A second attempt at interference made by the Baroness, although in a few humble words, provoked a scene of violence, and revealed to Madame de Chantal the cross to which she would have to resign herself. Emboldened by her first triumph, the servant cast off all restraint and became insolent. Madame de Chantal was ever after treated as a stranger, admitted, indeed, to the domestic circle, though not to the family council. She was never consulted about anything. "This servant carried so high a hand," says Mother de Chaugy, "and watched so closely over everything, that the humble daughter-in-law dared not give a glass of wine to a messenger without her direction."[1] "She was seven entire years," says Père Fichet, "under the rod of an insolent wretch, who completely governed the old man's household without allowing him the privilege of disposing of a rouble."[2]

But, tyrannized over and insulted at Monthelon, Madame de Chantal appeared greater and holier than when free and happy at Bourbilly. She turned her whole attention to the conversion of her father-in-law and his worthless servant, to conquer whom she used no other force than meekness. She would have taken any step, made any sacrifice, in the hope of leading them back to God. She even carried her heroism so far as to care for the woman's children as for her own, not only instructing them, but sometimes even dressing them, combing them, and cleaning their clothes. She rendered them the lowest services with her own hands.

[1] *Mémoires*, p. 38.

[2] *Vie de Sainte Chantal*, p. 128.

It must not be imagined that a life so humiliated cost her nothing. Her whole soul revolted at it, especially in the beginning. She acknowledged afterward that she was seized with indignation at seeing these children not only placed on a level with her own, but even frequently preferred to them. But she stifled the voice of nature and met the insults heaped upon her with a meek heart and gracious countenance. One day, some persons having said that, as soon as the old Baron died, they would cut off the woman's nose and throw her from a tower into the castle-moat, "Oh! no," replied the saint, "I shall protect her. If God makes use of her to impose a cross upon me, why should I wish her ill?" On another occasion, when some one complained that Madame de Chantal, though so qualified for it, was deprived at Monthelon of the direction of the household, she remarked: "God has ordered it thus, that I may have time to say my prayers."

Toward her father-in-law she observed a similar line of conduct. She embraced every opportunity of rendering him service, and no violence on his part was ever capable of diminishing her respect or exhausting her patience.

To this noble motive, which sustained her for seven years in her heroic course, was added another not less inspiriting. She was naturally a little haughty. There was in her character a dash of pride, something imperious,[1] which she desired to correct at any cost.

The present opportunity seemed to her a good chance to become humble by dint of humiliations, and she succeeded in her design beyond the power of expression. In this rude school better than in the most rigorous novitiate, God granted her to acquire that rare humility and perfect obedience by which she soon became, under the hand of St. Francis de Sales, the instrument of things so great.

Full of these humble thoughts, Madame de Chantal accomplished, in April, 1603, an act of the greatest importance. In the seventeenth century, as in the Middle Ages, the world was full of young ladies, widows, and married women, who, shut out from the cloister by age or duty, were affiliated to the old Religious Orders. This affiliation consisted in shar-

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 399. "Our blessed Mother was naturally of a domineering disposition, as our holy Father says."

ing in the prayers and penances of the great Religious Orders, and in conforming to their Rule, spirit, and dress in certain points, on condition of participating in their merits and good works. Unable to enter a monastery, the secular, in some manner, drew it to himself and introduced it at his own fireside. Two Third Orders of this kind were especially popular: that of St. Dominic and that of St. Francis. The marked characteristic of the first was to lead souls to penance; the second, to humility and poverty. Madame de Chantal preferred the latter. She was enrolled amongst its members on April 6, 1603.[1]

[1] After the ceremony of admission the following testimonial of membership was sent to her by Pére de Tournon, Provincial of Lyons. The original was presented to the Apostolic Commissaries, at the process of the saint's beatification.

Certificate of Affiliation of Lady J. F. Frémyot to the Capuchin Order.

"To the devout widow, Lady J. F. Frémyot, Baroness de Chantal, Brother Antoine de Tournon, Provincial of the Order of Friars-Minor, surnamed Capuchins, in the Province of St. Bonaventure, greeting in Our Lord Jesus Christ, etc,

"As, by the grant of several Pontiffs, and particularly of Urban V., of happy memory, the privilege is conceded to the General and Provincials of the Friars-Minor of St. Francis of affiliating to their Order those whom they shall judge worthy of the favor (after they have themselves petitioned for it), and giving them a share in all the good works daily performed in their Congregation, I, being well acquainted with your piety and the affection you bear our Congregation, and seeing your desire to be incorporated with it, so as to participate in the good therein performed, not to refuse so pious a petition, receive you in the charity of Our Lord Jesus Christ as a member of our Order, granting you a share in the merit of all the devotions, sacrifices, meditations, fasts, watches, suffrages, recitation of the Divine Office, and other good works that the Divine Goodness shall deign to effect and accept in said Order, and I supplicate this same Divine Goodness to be pleased to confirm in heaven what I have charitably conceded to you upon earth, which, as I hope, will be granted to you, if you persevere in a virtuous and Catholic life, according to the promise you made at holy Baptism, to which I exhort you, entreating you to pray to God for me and for our said Congregation. In proof and testimony whereof I have signed these presents with my own hand and sealed them with the great seal of our province.

"Given at our Convent of Dijon, this sixth of April, in the year of

It is singular that St. Chantal's early biographers should have omitted so important and significant an incident in her life. In girding herself with the cord of St. Francis of Assisi, Madame de Chantal had probably no other motive than to manifest her contempt for the world and her esteem for humility and poverty. But she was doing more than she suspected. She was unconsciously taking the first step toward that state of life which she was later called upon to embrace, although under a very different form, and toward which an invisible hand was beginning to incline her heart and direct the current of her life.

She was still, nevertheless, without a director. The farther she advanced in virtue, the more she felt the need of a guide, and more firmly convinced that she could not do without one, she redoubled her petitions. One day, whilst in prayer, she was suddenly rapt in God, and, after remaining a long time in ecstasy, "It seemed to me," she says, "that I was returning from another world where I had heard nothing but these words: 'As My Son Jesus was obedient, I will you to be obedient.'"

"Another time," she relates, "in the little wood near my father-in-law's castle at Monthelon, I felt so strong an interior attraction, I was so powerfully drawn to prayer, that I was unable to resist it, although I would have been glad to retire into the church close by. There it was shown me that divine love would destroy in me every trace of self, and that I should have numerous interior and exterior trials. When I returned to myself, I was shuddering and trembling all over. But my heart was full of great joy in God, because to suffer for God seemed to me the nourishment of love upon earth, as to enjoy God is the food of love in heaven." [1] It was in the midst of these humiliations and raptures that St. Francis de Sales, at last, appeared. For two years and a half Almighty God had been preparing Madame de Chantal for his coming. For this end He had given her a

Our Lord sixteen hundred and three." (*Procès de Béatification*, vol. ii. p. 606.)

[1] These visions are related by St. Chantal herself in her unpublished *Mémoires* already mentioned. Mother de Chaugy, who also gives them, p. 34, only copies these *Mémoires*.

glimpse of him at the foot of a hill at Bourbilly; and then He had allowed her to wander into the school of a spiritual master whose discipline, although totally unsuited to her, had the good effect to increase her desire to find that man, beloved by God and his fellow-creatures, to whom she was to confide her soul. At the same time that He roused these desires, He was subduing her proud nature and curbing her will at Monthelon; and, by bitter trials and wonderful ecstasies, He was Himself moulding her to obedience. In 1604 the work is finished. St. Francis de Sales may appear. Madame de Chantal is ready and awaiting him.

If Madame de Chantal was ready to receive the direction of the holy Bishop of Geneva, the latter was not less ready to give it to her. For years God had been preparing him in solitude, in prayer, in detachment, for this high ministry. He had been lavishing upon him gifts of nature and of grace, He had been silently increasing in his soul the lights and virtues that make true directors. After having contemplated the action of God in the heart of Madame de Chantal, let us now admire it in that of St. Francis de Sales. Far from lessening the interest of our narrative, this charming study will add to it one more beauty.

Not to be too lengthy, let us, though not without regret, pass over the apostle, the preacher, the controversialist, the theologian, and even the mystic. Let us depict only the director, for it is under this title that he is about to exercise so great and salutary an influence over Madame de Chantal. Here, too, we shall restrict our pen. Omitting the long and mysterious process by which God gradually raised him to full light and intense love, we shall seek in his letters and the testimony of those who knew him the precise qualities, virtues, and principles that made him so distinguished a director.

In the first place, few men have possessed in a more eminent degree the gift of discernment of spirits, that is to say, that keen and profound sagacity which penetrates the inmost recesses of the conscience, that infused knowledge, if we may so term it, of the action of God over souls, and, in a word, that sort of divine intuition which is the distinctive seal of genuine directors. "He had the eyes of a lynx in

the discernment of the interior," says Mgr. Camus, Bishop of Belley. "He penetrated even to the division of the soul and the spirit."[1] Initiated by long study into all the secrets of the interior life, thoroughly acquainted with the great mystical writers, and, what is still better, raised himself to the highest degree of prayer, St. Francis de Sales literally divined souls. "I begin where you ended, my very dear and sincerely loved child," he once wrote to Mother Angélique Arnault of Port-Royal, "for your last letter concludes thus: 'I believe that you know me well.' Yes, it is true, I do know you well."[2] And, in a few words, he revealed to her the depths of her conscience with a clearness that amazed her. He did the same to others; and the most beautiful pictures presented by this narrative will show forth the light he cast upon the souls that he directed. And who were these souls? Madame de Chantal, Madame de Charmoisy, Lady Bruslard, Mesdemoiselles Favre, de Bréchard, de Blonay, de Châtel, so great in mind, heart, and character, but greater still by the sanctity of their life and their close union with God.

This light was so remarkable that men who sympathized least with St. Francis de Sales, I might almost say, men the most hostile to him, at least toward his spirit and character, beheld it with admiration. "He was," says M. de Saint-Cyran, "one of that select number of Bishops who, called by the most excellent way, have merited to draw from the

[1] *L'Esprit de Saint François de Sales, évêque de Genève, représenté en Plusieurs de ses Actions et Paroles Remarquables, recueillies de quelques Sermons, Exhortations, Conférences, Conversations, Livres et Lettres*, by M. J. P. Camus, Bishop of Belley. Paris, 1641, 6 vols. 8vo. This very curious work, in which the true character of St. Francis de Sales is portrayed to the life, has been recently republished by M. l'Abbé Dépéry, now Bishop of Gap. Collot abridged it in the eighteenth century; and as his edition (Paris, 1727, 8vo) met with great success, the original work had become very rare, which was the more to be regretted, as Collot, in his desire to improve the work, had spoiled it. Bishop Dépéry has rendered a valuable service to both piety and literature by presenting to the public this neglected, but exact, portrait of St. Francis de Sales in its primitive integrity. We shall always quote from this edition (Paris, 1840, 3 vols. 8vo).

[2] Letter of St. Francis de Sales to Mother Angélique.

very source that light and knowledge of the truth of which they had need for the direction of souls; so that no ignorance could be imputed to them, even if they should have been wanting in any necessary knowledge, because, God having placed them, in spite of themselves, in certain positions as men of rare innocence and virtue, all that they afterward did for the good of souls was well done, authorized by God and approved by men."[1]

To this abundant spiritual illumination were joined still rarer gifts, perhaps, in St. Francis de Sales. His gentleness was charming. It might have been said, according to the expression of a witness, that all the sweetness possible to man found a dwelling-place in him,[2] or rather, to use the words of another who had known him: "It seemed as if this virtue had become incarnate in him."[3] It shone in his eyes, upon his countenance, in his least words. No one approached him without feeling himself attracted and, as it were, bewitched by the beauty and, if we may use the expression, the ineffable purity of this mildness. There was nothing spurious in it. It had taken root in his soul not as the fruit of cowardice, bitter experience, contempt, or weakness, but as a virtue that neither blighted nor withered any other principle. It drew crowds after him. They hung enraptured around him, they blocked up the space before his confessional. He was overwhelmed by them. "So many children cast themselves into my arms," he wrote to St. Chantal, "that I should be exhausted, if the love of God did not invigorate me." But, if by it he sometimes lost physical strength, his meekness, patience, and sweet serenity of speech and countenance never failed him. "They are children running to their father's bosom," he used to say. "Is

[1] *Lettres Chrétiennes et Spirituelles de Messire Jean du Verger de Hauranne . . . qui n'ont point encore été imprimées*, 1744, 2 vols. 12mo, vol. i. p. 56. See how artfully the Abbé of Saint-Cyran tries to defend Jansenism by the authority of St. Francis de Sales: "*Even if he should have been wanting in any necessary knowledge*" (Jansenism). This "*even if*" is charming! And what follows is not less so: "*It could not be imputed to him; all that he did was well done, allowed by God . . .*"

[2] Process of Canonization: Deposition of Lesmontey.

[3] Camus: *Esprit de Saint François de Sales*, vol. iii. p. 142.

a hen vexed when her little chickens run together under her wings? On the contrary, she extends those maternal wings as wide as she can, to cover them all; and my heart, also, seems to dilate in proportion as the number of my dear children increases around me." And then he would add: "I love these dear children so much, I love them so much."

His mildness was not merely the effect of virtue and a kind heart. It proceeded from the firm conviction that good can be done to men but by the force of gentleness. He abounded in comparisons and figures to express this idea. "Be always as mild as possible," he used to say to a young Bishop; "and remember that more flies are attracted by a spoonful of honey than by a hundred barrels of vinegar. If there must be excess in anything, let it be in mildness. Sugar never spoils the sauce."[1] And to another accustomed to use rather quick language, reproaches, and reproofs, he constantly repeated the following maxim: "All by love, nothing by force." He had frequently upon his lips the great and admirable principle, that we should act toward souls as the angels do, by gentle inspirations and without violence.[2] They should be won, but in the manner of perfumes, which possess no other power to attract than their sweetness; and sweetness, he used to say, how can it attract but sweetly?[3] As an example of this, he was accustomed to cite Jesus, the High-Priest, standing at the door of the heart, gently pressing for admittance, but never forcing it. *Ecce sto ad ostium et pulso.*[4]

Not that he absolutely denied the utility of blame and reproof under certain circumstances; but he would have nothing human in the reprimand, nothing that betrayed impatience or haughtiness, nothing that was not tempered by meekness and charity. "What more bitter than green walnuts?" he used to say. "Preserve them, and there is nothing sweeter. So it is with reproof. It is tart by nature, but when preserved in gentleness and cooked by the fire of

[1] Camus: *Esprit de Saint François de Sales*, vol. i. p. 4.
[2] Letter to St. Chantal, Oct. 14, 1604.
[3] *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, book ii. chap. xii.
[4] *Esprit de Saint François de Sales*, vol. ii. p. 36.

charity, it is perfectly cordial, sweet, and delicious."[1] His ordinary saying was, "More oil than vinegar and salt is necessary for good salads."[2]

A superficial view leads to the notion that meekness is akin to weakness. But this is not true. It is the passionate who are weak. They yield to others because they do not govern themselves. "Blessed are the meek," says Jesus Christ, "for they shall possess the land." St. Francis de Sales was of this class, and perhaps nothing in him is so remarkable as that union of sweetness and strength. "If he had charms that made one love him," says Bishop Camus, "he possessed also the power of making himself, if not feared, at least respected; but with a respect so full of love that I knew several persons who used to tremble at his approach, not so much from the fear of displeasing him (for nothing displeased him, since the most disagreeable and unmannerly were agreeable to him), as from fear of not pleasing him enough."[3] And the Bishop adds: "His meekness gave him such ascendency over minds that all bowed before him."[4]

But behold something very wonderful, though but seldom noticed! St. Francis de Sales had under his spiritual guidance the most ardent souls of his time. For several years he directed the young Mother Angélique Arnault of Port-Royal, one of those indomitable natures that break, but never bend. As long as he lived, he exercised unlimited spiritual control over Madame de Chantal, Mademoiselle de Bréchard, and Mademoiselle Favre, all three of firm, resolute, impetuous will. He always led them; he never was led by them. They could never complain of his weakness; on the contrary, they praised and extolled his firmness. "As for myself," wrote Mother Angélique, the most high-spirited of them all, "I assure you, that the Bishop of Geneva never seemed to me over-indulgent, as some have thought him."[5] Besides, if we open his books and letters, what do we find under those beautiful figures, behind those gracious lessons? The sternest teachings of Christian morality, the most crucifying

[1] *L'Esprit de Saint François de Sales*, vol. i. p. 5. [2] *Id.*, *ibid.*
[3] *Esprit*, vol. iii. p. 142. [4] *Id.*, *ibid.*
[5] *Mémoires* of Mother Angélique. See, also, her letter to her nephew, M. le Maistre,

practices recommended, and, sometimes, the most heart-breaking sacrifices exacted of his spiritual children, whom, for this very reason, he wished to be strong and vigorous.

This contrast of strength and tenderness was so striking, that St. Francis de Sales himself wondered at it. "It is strange," he wrote; "there is no one in the world, I think, who could love more sincerely, more tenderly, and, to speak candidly, more fondly, than I; and I am even somewhat lavish of my affection and kind words, particularly in the beginning. . . . And yet, I love independent and vigorous souls, such as have no effeminacy about them; for too great tenderness troubles the heart, disquiets and distracts it in prayer. How is it that I, who am one of the most affectionate of beings, can feel thus? Yet, such are really my sentiments, and it is wonderful how I can reconcile these feelings with one another." [1]

But this was not the only species of harmony existing in the soul of St. Francis de Sales, in whom harmony abounded. His zeal is well known. He converted seventy thousand heretics; and he would have gone to the end of the world to save one sinner. There was in him, however, something more remarkable than his zeal, namely, his patience and condescension in the direction of souls. He possessed in the highest degree that art, sovereign in all things and the secret of all success, the art of knowing how to wait. Convinced that virtue, like the aurora, increases slowly and insensibly, his method was to proceed gently with his task, "with leaden step," taking great care not to walk faster than grace, and, for this reason, practising that favorite maxim of his, "to make haste gently, and to advance only step by step." He would smile quietly when he heard of certain directors, either very young or too eager, who, strangers to the divine science of patience, led souls so rapidly forward as to put them out of breath. He used to apply one of his graceful figures to express his thought on this subject. A director, he said, is like a nurse or a mother. Like her, he must become little with his little ones, take short steps with them, carry them in his arms over rough places, and sometimes

[1] *Lettres de Saint François de Sales:* Old edition, book vi. letter xxiii.

put them down on the ground; but he must never be vexed when they fall, nor impatient at their slowness, and, above all, not wish them to run before they have strength to do so. The holy Bishop understood and practised all this marvellously well. This it was that made him one of the best directors ever vouchsafed by Heaven to earth.

St. Francis de Sales possessed another charm, which gained the hearts of all who approached him. He was sincere. "I will say a little word to you, but the word of a friend, whispered in your ear, nay, in the ear of your heart," he said one day; "I know nothing of the art of lying or dissimulation, nor have I any skill in dissembling, which is the principal tool, the chief resort of politics. I act openly, like a Frenchman of the olden times. What is on my lips is precisely what comes from my heart. I cannot say one thing and mean another. I hate duplicity as I do death." That refined wit for which he was so noted, and the charm of which his simplicity so greatly increased, never prevented his lips from being as sincere as his heart. A word from him brought peace, because all knew it to be the expression of what he felt.

But qualities so amiable and so rare would have been insufficient to make a director of St. Francis de Sales, if he had had an unfeeling heart. How direct souls if they are not loved? Above all, how console them? For to direct souls is most frequently but to console and encourage them. This was, happily, one of the most beautiful sides of his beautiful character. Who was ever more sympathetic, who more tender and affectionate than he? St. Vincent de Paul exclaimed in admiration: "Oh, what must God be, since the Bishop of Geneva is so good!" Open his letters. What a flow of tenderness throughout! A mother does not love her children more dearly than St. Francis de Sales loved the souls under his spiritual direction. If one of them fell into trouble, if he heard of the death of a parent or a friend, he wept bitterly, sometimes sobbed aloud, even during the Holy Sacrifice, and, fearing lest others might be scandalized, he would sweetly ask pardon, saying that God had given him a weak heart and that he could not restrain his feelings.

We cannot resist the pleasure of citing an example of

this. "When St. Francis de Sales lost his old tutor, M. Déage, Canon of his Cathedral," says the Bishop of Belley, "the first Mass he said for the repose of his soul was interrupted by sobs which attested how much he felt his death. But when he came to the *Pater noster*, which is said after the Consecration, he was obliged to stop and give full vent to his tears, and it was some time before he could repress them. At last, having made a truce with his eyes, he finished Mass, absorbed in deep sadness. His almoner, who usually heard his confession, fearing lest his sadness might injure his health, accompanied him to his room, where, finding himself alone with him, he attempted to console him. 'Ah!' said the saint to him, 'this soul is happy where it is; it would not wish to be here again. It is in the arms and the bosom of the mercy of God, where it is resting like another St. John on the loving Heart of Jesus Christ. But do you want to know what wrung so many tears from me when I came to the *Pater noster?* Ah! I remembered that it was this good man who first taught me to say my *Pater*.'"[1]

Tender, sincere, and deep as were his affections, they were, at the same time, singularly elevated. It was in the Heart of Our Lord that he beheld all souls. "Alas!" he used to say, "whoever beholds them out of that Heart runs the risk of loving them neither purely, constantly, nor disinterestedly. But *there*, who would not love them? who find them tiresome? who would not bear with their defects? Yes, these souls are in the breast of the Saviour. They are there so lovely and so much loved, that the Spouse dies of love for them."

Let us add that to this pure and tender affection for souls he joined remarkable detachment from individuals, extreme watchfulness over his words, looks, and demeanor, particularly with respect to women, who had constant recourse to him. He treated them with such modesty and reserve that he never received them save with the door of the room half open. He spoke to them without looking at them, he looked at them without seeing them, so that, when they were gone,

[1] *Esprit de Saint François de Sales*, vol. i. p. 388.

he was unable to say what they looked like. One day, some one spoke of a relative of his whose beauty was remarkable. "It is true," the saint replied, "I have often seen her; but, I assure you, I have not yet looked at her." As the Bishop of Belley asked how this seeing people without looking at them was to be understood, the saint, a little surprised, and slightly coloring at having betrayed his virtue, answered: "Well, now, I have often seen and looked at you. But this relative of mine belongs to a sex which is to be seen without being looked at, that is to say, superficially, in a general way, and only enough to know that it is a woman whom we are addressing." On another occasion, speaking of a lady celebrated for her beauty, St. Francis de Sales said that she was very *specious*. "Why do you use that word?" asked the Bishop of Belley. "It may be good Savoyard, but it is scarcely French." "It is neither French nor Savoyard," was the reply, "but it is very ecclesiastic." "But," returned the Bishop of Belley, "must priests murder their own language in this way?" "No," he said; "but when they are speaking of that sex, such words as handsome, lovely, beautiful, do not, it seems to me, sound well on their lips, because these expressions are, in some measure, a verdict against their eyes, and because it is well to modify them by terms more moderate." "Judge by this," exclaims the Bishop of Belley, "of the purity of the words, looks, and thoughts of this blessed man, truly holy in body and soul."

Let us not forget, as a finishing stroke to this portrait of St. Francis de Sales represented as a director, his immense love for God. His union with Our Lord was so close, that the mere mention of His adorable name would cause his countenance to glow with fervor. His piety was tender, simple, and we would say childlike, if the deep earnestness and heroism with which it was tinged could be forgotten. He might say in all truth: "If I knew a single fibre of affection in my heart not of God, in God, and for God, I would immediately tear it out, for I would rather not exist at all than exist not entirely and unreservedly for God."

When men reach so high a degree of spirituality, some likeness to Jesus Christ is reflected upon their countenance. The copy begins to show a resemblance. We cannot behold

it without thinking of the original. This was the case with St. Francis de Sales. All who approached him withdrew impressed, as if they had seen Jesus Christ. St. Vincent de Paul did not hesitate to say that the holy Bishop of Geneva was the truest, the most faithful likeness of the Saviour that had appeared in his century;[1] and St. Chantal herself, surpassing all others in enthusiasm, will one day exclaim: "O my God, if I dare say it, I affirm that my blessed Father was a living image of the Son of God. For the order and economy of his soul were, in truth, quite supernatural and divine. Many have told me that when they beheld this holy man it seemed to them that they saw Our Lord on earth."[2]

Such was the person whom Almighty God had prepared to guide Madame de Chantal in the sublime paths along which He was about to lead her. The mission of forming this great soul and of preparing her for her high vocation had been confided, as we have seen, to two men, President Frémyot and St. Francis de Sales. She came from the hands of the former, strong-minded, ardent, capable of sacrifices and heroic deeds. We are now to see her, under the guidance of the latter, temper and soften that energy of character imbibed, perhaps, from the education received from her father, bend her will to obedience, transform herself by humility, clothe herself with sweetness and gentleness, and attain, though not without trouble, to that ideal of a Christian woman from which she was still far distant, in spite of the resplendent glory of her first thirty years.

At the beginning of the year 1604, to which the course of our narrative has brought us, St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal were still unacquainted with each other. It is possible that the holy Baroness may have heard of the celebrated Bishop of Geneva, but it is certain that he had never heard of her. They lived two hundred leagues apart, destined, without knowing it, for the same work, made, consequently, for each other, and bearing in their soul that difference of character and that harmony of feeling which are the sign and condition of great unions.

[1] *Esprit de Saint François de Sales*, vol. i. p. 250.

[2] Letter to the Rev. Father Dom Jean de St. François.

These two beautiful souls are not of the same class of saints. St. Francis de Sales might be ranked with the tender and affectionate St. John, St. Ambrose, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Bonaventure, and Fénelon; St. Chantal, on the contrary, is of the firm and zealous race of St. Paul, St. Dominic, St. Ignatius, St. Teresa, and Bossuet. However that may be, their diversity of disposition and character is evident. It is seen even in their style of writing. St. Francis de Sales' style is florid and copious. It flows through figures, symbols, and comparisons. He revels in flowers. St. Chantal, on the contrary, writes in a vigorous, succinct style, without coloring, though sprightly and ardent, with something of masculine energy unusual in her sex.

But here the dissimilarity between them ceases. In every other respect the most perfect harmony reigns. Both were noble-minded, both possessed the same elevated sentiments, the same greatness of soul. Both manifested the same ardent love for God, the same horror for sin, the same contempt for passing things, the same yearning for the things of eternity.

And, what is worthy of remark, in spite of an apparent difference, both really trod the same supernatural ways. St. Francis de Sales sanctified himself by infusing firmness into his meekness, and we shall see St. Chantal sanctified by infusing meekness into her firmness. This delicate task accomplished, both labored to found for the service of the Church a work whose distinctive feature will be gentleness in strength and strength in gentleness.

For years St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal had labored earnestly, but apart, at the first work, which they had already advanced, though in different degrees. Both became daily more humble, more mortified, more detached from the world and self. Both were pure as angels and already beginning to experience that divine light and ardor of which God imparted an idea to St. Vincent de Paul by showing them to him "under the form of two balls of fire." Since, then, this first work was advancing, the second might begin. It was time for St. Francis de Sales and the holy Baroness to become acquainted with each other, and Dijon was the place chosen by Divine Providence for their first interview.

On August 3, 1603, the Mayor of Dijon, unconsciously obedient to the order of God, assembled the municipal body and proposed to invite the Bishop of Geneva to preach the Lent in the Holy Chapel of Dijon.[1] On receiving the invitation, St. Francis de Sales felt so convinced of its being a call from God, that, in spite of the efforts of his friends and even of his director to dissuade him from accepting,[2] he hastened to reply to the Mayor, saying that he was "determined to overrule all obstacles, to overcome all difficulties, rather than not reach Dijon at the specified time." [3]

Meanwhile President Frémyot wrote to announce the news to his daughter and to invite her to Dijon. He knew what a gratification it would be to her to hear a Bishop so renowned for learning and holiness. Madame de Chantal was delighted at the thought of the beautiful and pious sermons she would hear during Lent, and the preparations for her trip were hastily made. In the early part of March,

[1] "August 13, 1603. The Mayor says that, if it be agreeable to the Assembly for the Lord Bishop of Geneva, who is a very learned theologian, to preach during next Advent and Lent, he will with pleasure undertake the negotiation of the matter. Concluded that the said Bishop be entreated to do so." (*Registre des délibérations du corps de ville. Archives municipales de Dijon.*)

[2] "You know," writes St. Francis de Sales, "what I told you once about my journey to Dijon, which I made against the advice of all my friends, but particularly of one to whom I owed the most deference (the Father Rector of Chambéry), who with great zeal for my good was on the point of keeping me back. But that great God, upon whom I kept my eyes fixed, so drew my soul to this blessed journey, that nothing could stop me." (Migne edition of *Lettres de Saint François de Sales à Sainte Chantal*, vol. v. p. 559.)

[3] "August 26, 1603. Was read a letter written to the city by the reverend Father in God, Francis de Sales, Prince-Bishop of Geneva, dated from Annecy, in which he offers to proceed to said city, for the purpose of preaching during next Lent, excusing himself from coming for Advent. Answer will be made to him that his offer is accepted." (*Archives municipales de Dijon. Délibérations du corps de ville.*) For a long time the city of Dijon, with noble pride, preserved this letter of St. Francis de Sales. At the present day it lies neglected in a corner of the archives, where it was pointed out to us by a learned friend, M. Joseph Garnier, archivist of the Department of Côte-d'Or. We give the whole letter in Note IV, at the end of volume.

1604, the two saints started for Dijon, the one from Annecy, the other from Monthelon, in Burgundy, both obeying the invisible hand that was conducting them, and neither dreaming of the wonders to which the journey would lead.

These wonders we are about to relate. But, before proceeding, let us pause and reflect. The ground upon which we are about to tread is holy. Let us "loosen the latchets of our shoes," that is, let us purify our soul and raise our heart and mind to the sublime height of the heavenly conversations to which we shall listen, to the grand and lovely scenes upon which we shall gaze.

CHAPTER VI.

MADAME DE CHANTAL TAKES ST. FRANCIS DE SALES FOR HER DIRECTOR.—THEIR FIRST INTERVIEW AND LETTERS.

1604.

Contemporary writers have given so beautiful an account of the first interviews between St. Francis de Sales and Madame de Chantal, that we shall quote them here in full and in all their native simplicity.

"Notwithstanding the utmost diligence," say the old biographers, "our saint could not reach Dijon until the first Friday of Lent. That very evening she attended the sermon of the holy Bishop. No sooner had he ascended the pulpit than she distinctly recognized in him the person shown her by God. She was overjoyed, and that she might see, consider, and hear him more easily, she had her seat placed opposite the pulpit, where she could look straight at him.

"The holy prelate, also, noticed this widow among all the other ladies present, and had a sweet remembrance of his vision at Sales Castle. It is true that the act of preaching and the attention he paid to his words rendered him almost unconscious of her presence; yet as he very clearly recognized in her the person whom God had formerly shown him, he felt a holy curiosity to know who she was. By a happy chance, he addressed himself one day to the Archbishop of Bourges for the desired information.

"'Tell me, I beg you,' he said, 'who is that youthful-looking lady, a light brunette, dressed as a widow, who sits opposite to me at the sermon and listens so attentively to the word of Truth?'

"With a smile, the Archbishop told who she was; and the man of God was delighted to hear that she was his sister,

for these two great prelates had already begun to contract a deep and holy friendship." [1]

The Archbishop of Bourges here spoken of was none other than the young André Frémyot, whose life had been in so great danger fifteen years before during the hostilities of the League. Sent to Paris in 1591 to finish his studies, his brilliant talents and wide range of intellect won for him considerable distinction. He even took the doctor's cap in the celebrated University of that city. On his return to Dijon, although scarcely twenty-six years old, he was admitted as Councillor into the Parliament of Burgundy. Every one was predicting that he would one day occupy the presidential chair, then filled by his father, when suddenly his own thoughts took another turn. He began to show an inclination for the ecclesiastical state, which ended in his doffing his lawyer's gown and receiving Minor Orders. Before his promotion to the priesthood, he was appointed Archbishop of Bourges and Abbé of Saint-Étienne, in Dijon. Henry IV., who loved him very much for his father's sake, added to these dignities large estates in the canton of Gex. But the King had forgotten that these estates were no longer in his gift. His Majesty had presented them some time before to the holy Bishop of Geneva, for the purpose of establishing Catholic parishes upon them. When the young Archbishop attempted to take possession of the property, St. Francis de Sales entered a suit against him, but lost it; whereupon he appealed to the Parliament of Burgundy. Such was the relative position of the two prelates to each other when St. Francis was invited to preach in Dijon. Besides the divine impulse which urged him to accept the invitation, he was influenced, also, by the desire of conferring with the young Archbishop and, if possible, of arranging their difference amicably. He hoped to obtain more by a friendly explanation than could be gained from lawyers and parliamentary decisions. Nor was he deceived. Mgr. André Frémyot had no sooner seen St. Francis de Sales than he fell under his charm, and from the very first resigned to

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 42.—*Vie du Bienheureux François de Sales*, by Charles-Auguste de Sales, p. 315.

him his rights. There resulted between the two prelates one of those strong friendships that nothing can sever. It was for the youthful André the honor of his life, and it largely compensated for the sacrifices he had made. From their friendship arose the social intercourse of St. Francis de Sales with President Frémyot and his daughter, the Baroness de Chantal.

The dwelling occupied by St. Francis de Sales during his stay at Dijon contributed to this. It was a beautiful mansion, recently built in the style of Francis I., not very large, but in exquisite taste, and situated in the most respectable part of the city. It was at the end of a court and surrounded by large trees, under which the saint could prepare his sermons and read his breviary. It was, indeed, a suitable abode for a solitary and a Bishop. By a happy coincidence, this mansion belonged to M. de Villers, Royal Advocate, a rich and very pious gentleman, the intimate friend of President Frémyot, and the husband of that Lady de Villers with whom the Baroness de Chantal was so closely united in the bonds of friendship.[1]

Another circumstance connected with the Bishop of Geneva's stay in Dijon, and which served to facilitate his acquaintance with our saint, was the universal enthusiasm he at once aroused. It was not enough to hear him in public. Every one wanted to see him in private, to talk with him, to revel, if we may say so, in his words, not only holy, but witty, ingenuous, elegant, and pleasing. As his time was absorbed by the confessional and the pulpit, and he was free only at meals, it was a matter of rivalry, particularly among the most distinguished members of the Parliament, as to who should invite him to dine. President

[1] *Archives municipales de Dijon. Délibérations du corps de ville.* "March 9, 1604. One hundred and fifty livres shall be appropriated for the entertainment of Mgr. the Bishop of Geneva, who is to preach in the Holy Chapel, which sum shall be placed in the hands of the wife of Councillor de Villers, in whose house the said Bishop shall lodge." "May 21, 1604. Account with M. de Villers and his wife for the expenses of the Bishop of Geneva, one hundred sous a day." The mansion in which St. Francis de Sales stopped is still standing, No. 44 Rue Vannerie, at the end of the court. To this day it is known by the name of St. Francis de Sales' Pavilion.

Frémyot was always present at these dinners, to which he was very naturally accompanied by his daughter. Thus it was that Almighty God brought about the frequent meetings of the two saints.

Nowhere, however, did the young widow see the holy man with more satisfaction than at her father's house; and nowhere did St. Francis de Sales go with more pleasure.[1] He himself tells us that every one smiled upon him and made him welcome to the house.[2] First of all, there was the kind President, whom St. Francis de Sales "loved as a father," and whose "fine library he used to admire and consult;" then the Archbishop of Bourges, in whom he found "such genuine goodness of mind and heart," and whom he esteemed "one of the most sincere and straightforward of friends;" and Madame de Chantal, too, of whom he said nothing, "for fear of saying too little." "And has not your kind brother, M. the President of the Exchequer," he added in the same letter, "told you that he, also, loves me very much? There is not a single member of your household, even to little Celse-Bénigne and your Aimée,[3] who did not make much of me."

It is in the midst of this noble group, or, if the expression be allowed, it was in this lovely frame, that Madame de Chantal first appears to us in her relations with St. Francis de Sales.

Some admirable, though too short, fragments of the first conversation of the two saints have been preserved, in which the gentleness of the one, the firmness of the other, and the magnanimity and the disinterestedness of both are shown in full light.

One day, the Baroness appeared at dinner dressed a little more elegantly than usual. "Madame," said the saint to her, smiling, "do you desire to marry again?"

"Oh! no, my Lord," was the prompt answer.

[1] Bussy-Rabutin: *Vie abrégée*, chap. ii. "The holy Bishop was a frequent guest at President Frémyot's table."

[2] Letter from St. Francis de Sales to President Frémyot, dated Oct. 7, 1604.

[3] The Baroness de Chantal's two eldest children.

"Well, then," replied St. Francis de Sales, "you must lower your flag."

She understood the allusion, and next day laid aside certain ornaments and trinkets she had been wearing, and which were allowed to ladies of quality after their second mourning.

Another day, the Bishop noticed "certain little silk laces on her crape head-dress." "Madame," said he to her, "would you not be neat enough without the lace?" That very evening, before retiring to rest, she ripped it off.

Another time, seeing some tassels on the cord of her collar, "the saint said to her with his usual sweetness: 'Madame, would your collar be less securely fastened if that invention were not at the end of the cord?' She immediately turned aside, took her scissors, and cut off the tassels."[1]

Very trifling sacrifices, some may say. Yes, they are indeed, but, trifling as they are, scarcely worthy of being noted in a history that will record others so brilliant, they throw great light upon the character of St. Francis de Sales and of St. Chantal. We here see the holy Bishop in his true colors, amiable, witty, a smile always on his lips, and yet quite as austere as gracious, covering the cross with flowers though without destroying its bitterness, and, as if amusing himself, leading souls into that rigid path of simplicity and self-denial which is the true road for the Christian. Here, too, we see the noble and generous disposition of Madame de Chantal, her prompt obedience, her anxiety to know the will of God, her zeal in accomplishing it, and that energy of soul which no sacrifice will ever daunt.

One of the most admirable characteristics of the saints, and that in which they bear the least resemblance to the great ones of the world, is that the more closely we behold them in the intimacy of private life, the more respect and admiration they excite. Madame de Chantal daily experienced this. What she knew of St. Francis de Sales, what she admired in him as a preacher, seemed a mere shadow

[1] Second *Mémoire* of Mother Louise-Dorothée de Marigny.—*Procès de Canonisation*, vol. ii. p. 976.—*Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 42.

compared with what she beheld as soon as she was permitted to see him more closely. "I admired everything he did and said," she tells us, "and I looked upon him as an angel. His countenance, holy and dignified, charmed me so that I could not withdraw my eyes from him. His words edified me not less. He spoke little, but in a manner so wise, so kind, so satisfactory to all who consulted him, that I thought no happiness comparable to that of being near him, of hearing the words of wisdom that fell from his lips. For this, as well as to witness the holiness of his actions, I should have esteemed myself too fortunate to be the last of his servants."

On his side, the more St. Francis de Sales saw of Madame de Chantal, the more he was struck at her humility, modesty, and saintly fervor. "Oh! yes," he used to say, "God will surely make her a St. Paula, a St. Angela, a St. Catherine of Genoa, or some other such holy widow." And again: "There could not be a greater intellect united with deeper humility. She is as simple and sincere as a child, with a judgment solid and elevated. She is a great soul, with courage for holy enterprises above her sex." His usual expression, which he often repeated, and which alone expresses well his impression of her, was: "I have found in Dijon what Solomon could not find in Jerusalem, *the strong woman* in Madame de Chantal."

By this reciprocal admiration of each other's virtues, Almighty God prepared these two great souls for the close spiritual relations that were to exist between them.

Besides the regular sermons he preached in the Holy Chapel, in presence of the municipality and the Parliament, St. Francis de Sales gave instructions upon the devout life to all the pious ladies of Dijon, assembled for this purpose at the Ursuline Convent but lately founded.[1] Madame de Chantal never failed to assist at these instructions. They were simple, nay, quite familiar in style. The saint felt under no restraint here, and he poured himself out in accents that went straight to the heart. A thousand times, on leaving these conferences, moved by his words, and embalmed by the perfume of virtue she had inhaled, she was

[1] *Chroniques de l'Ordre des Ursulines, recueillies pour l'Usage des Religieuses du même Ordre,* by M. D. P. V. Paris, 1673, 1 vol. 4to.

tempted to go cast herself at the holy Bishop's feet, and open to him her soul. "I was dying to do so," she wrote later, but the fear of transgressing her vow always restrained her.[1] Thus Lent was passing away, Holy Week had already begun, and she had not yet dared to say a word about her conscience to the Bishop of Geneva.

On Holy Wednesday she was again suddenly assailed by a violent temptation to discouragement. Her director happened to be absent, and she knew not where to turn for advice. In this state of mind she went to her brother's residence, and begged him to procure for her a few moments' conversation with St. Francis de Sales, who was dining with him that day. "After the table was removed," says Charles-Auguste, "the Archbishop of Bourges presented his sister to the servant of God, and then managed to leave them alone. They conversed together a long time in a corner of the room, but in sight of all present." After a while the Bishop of Geneva went into the church, followed by Madame de Chantal, who knelt down and made a first and timid manifestation of her soul to him who was later to read her so clearly. "I left him," she said afterward, "so happy and contented, that it seemed to me I had been listening to an angel." "And yet," she adds, "my scruples about my vow so restrained me that I said only half of what I wished to say."[2]

The next day, Thursday, a ceremony which deeply affected Madame de Chantal took place in the abbatial church of Saint-Étienne. Her brother, André Frémyot, named to the Archbishopric of Bourges, said his first Mass. He had been ordained on the Saturday in Passion Week; but, by the advice of St. Francis de Sales, had waited until Holy Thursday, the day upon which Our Lord instituted the Holy Sacrifice, to celebrate Mass for the first time. The holy Bishop of Geneva assisted the new celebrant. An immense crowd filled the church. All the relatives of the Frémyot family, the magistrates, and the pious ladies of Dijon, pressed around the altar. As, according to the Roman ritual, there

[1] Autograph *Mémoires* of St. Chantal. Archives of Annecy, MS., 4to.

[2] Autograph *Mémoires* of St. Chantal.

could be only one Mass in each church and all the other priests were to communicate from the hand of the celebrant. "St. Francis de Sales," says Charles-Auguste, "went and knelt on the lower part of the altar-step, and advanced on his knees to the middle of it, to receive Holy Communion, which he did with so great devotion as to draw tears from the eyes of all present. His head seemed encircled with rays of light," [1] especially at the moment young Frémyot, with heart moved and eyes suffused with tears, placed the Sacred Host upon the lips of the holy Bishop. Madame de Chantal saw the prodigy and pointed it out to her cousin, Madame de Barres. It was a kind of aureola, the brilliancy of which gradually increased until it dazzled the eyes of all who saw it. We may imagine the impression such an occurrence would make upon Madame de Chantal, and the great impetus it imparted to her desire of unfolding her conscience to the holy Bishop.[2]

After Mass, the Archbishop of Bourges gave a dinner, to which the leading gentlemen and some of the most distinguished ladies of the city were invited. The Baroness de Chantal was seated next the holy Bishop. During dinner, the pious widow told a lady sitting by her that she intended making a pilgrimage to Saint-Claude. St. Francis de Sales immediately turned toward her and asked when she thought of starting, adding that they would, perhaps, be there at the same time. His mother, Madame de Boisy, he said, had made a vow to visit the shrine, but that sickness had hitherto prevented her; that she would soon be able to start. He would accompany her on the journey and be happy to meet there the sister of his friend, the Archbishop of Bourges. Madame de Chantal, still under the influence of the prodigy witnessed that morning, was overjoyed at the proposal.

The following week, as her director was still absent, she begged St. Francis de Sales to hear her confession once more. In order to test her, the saint made some difficulty, "telling her that women are often prone to idle curiosity."

[1] Charles-Auguste de Sales: *Vie du Bienheureux François de Sales*, p. 317.

[2] Process of St. Francis de Sales' Canonization: Deposition of François Favre, a witness of the prodigy.

He consented, however, and whilst she was making her confession he was suddenly inundated with the clearest light for her direction, and "he felt his soul so singularly drawn toward hers" that he left the confessional absorbed in thought, at a loss as to what it meant.

It was probably in the course of this week that Madame de Chantal conducted St. Francis de Sales to the celebrated pilgrimage of Notre-Dame d'Étang.[1] It is related that when the holy Bishop, after climbing the steep side of the mountain, reached the plateau upon which the chapel stands, he knelt down at the foot of the miraculous statue and poured forth in an impromptu prayer all the sentiments of faith, piety, and tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin with which his beautiful soul was filled. "Hail! most sweet Virgin Mary, Queen of solitudes, Virgin Mother of the hidden God, thou art pleased to grant thy favors in spots far from the haunts of men! I conjure thee, by the wonders thou hast deigned to work on this mountain upon which thy miraculous image is preserved, to accept me for thy son and servant, to grant all my petitions, as well as those made by Madame de Chantal. . . . Give us every virtue, but above all, humility."[2]

The day after Low Sunday, St. Francis de Sales, about to leave Dijon, went to pay a farewell visit to Madame de Chantal. After several kind and holy words, "Madame," he said to her in that grave and gentle tone peculiar to him, "God forces me to speak to you in confidence. His goodness grants me the grace that, as soon as I have turned my face to the altar to say Holy Mass, all distractions vanish; but for some time you are always coming to my mind, not to distract me, but to unite me more closely to God. I do

[1] The Baroness de Chantal owned at Fleury, at the foot of the mountain of Notre-Dame d'Étang, a house that is still in existence. It belongs to President de la Cuisine, who, when he had it repaired, preserved with pious care the old wainscoting and placed upon the front of the building an inscription proving the fact that St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal came there together.

[2] We quote a part only of this long prayer. The whole may be found in the book called *Histoire de la Découverte de l'Image Miraculeuse de Notre-Dame d'Étang*, by Père Dejoux, Provincial of the Minims of the Duchy of Burgundy. Dijon, 1726, 18mo, p. 89.

not know what He wishes me to understand by it." He added several other things in a very serious manner. He seemed rapt in God. When he had finished speaking, the holy young widow called her four little children and made them kneel down before him. After caressing and blessing them, he blessed their mother also, and left her inflamed with an ardent desire to give herself entirely to God.

St. Francis de Sales left the next day. When about to enter the carriage, he beheld in the square of Saint-Étienne an immense crowd waiting to receive a last blessing. The emotion was universal. Some were shedding tears, others tried to touch his garments, and some went so far as to stop the horses to prevent his leaving. "No, no, my Lord," they cried, "you shall not go; or, if it must be, we shall carry you in our arms to Annecy." Madame de Chantal's aunt, Madame Guillemine Tabourot, widow of Councillor Frémyot, was heard to exclaim: "Oh, what a thief! My God, what a thief!" When asked what she meant, she answered: "Oh, do you not see that he is carrying away all hearts?" The Mayor and municipal officers came to thank him, and to offer him a costly service of silver. But he refused: "No, no, gentlemen, I did not come to get your money. I want nothing but your hearts;" and entering the carriage, he drove off amid the acclamations and tears of the whole population.[1] Madame de Chantal witnessed his departure

[1] The following acts are taken from the archives of the city of Dijon: "April 9. As we are informed that His Lordship, the Bishop of Geneva, who has been preaching during this holy time of Lent at the Holy Chapel, will leave on Easter Tuesday, the House has resolved to go in a body to thank him for the trouble he has taken to edify the people, who are very much pleased with him, and he shall be accompanied as far as Saint-Jehan de Losne in Auxonne."

"This 26th of April, MM. the Viscount and council-men went to the Lord-Bishop of Geneva, took leave of him, and thanked him for the trouble he had taken to edify the people by his holy and learned sermons, praying God to preserve and guard him. The said Lord-Bishop replied that it was he who ought to feel much indebted to the city for the honor and favor the inhabitants had done him by assisting at his sermons; that he would never forget it; and he begged them to pray to God for him, as he would do for them. The Mayor thanked him very warmly, and presented him with a large silver basin, gilt inside and outside, which gift he refused. He likewise de-

from a distance. She followed the holy Bishop with her eyes, happy at having made his acquaintance, distressed at so soon losing him, and little dreaming of the consequences that would result from her short interviews with him, consequences of immense importance for the entire Church.

St. Francis de Sales was equally unconscious of these results, although recent events had given him matter for serious reflection. The vision at Sales Castle, the impulse to go to Dijon, the unexpected appearance of the lady who had been shown him in vision, the divine light that beamed upon his soul during Madame de Chantal's confession, the remarkable circumstance that the more he reflected upon all these things, the more he felt himself drawn to God,—such were the thoughts that occupied his mind as he left Dijon. At the first relay, he entered the inn, asked for paper, and wrote the following lines to our saint:

"It seems to me that God has given me to you. I feel more assured of it every hour. I beg the Divine Goodness to place us often together in the Sacred Wounds of Jesus Christ, and to grant us the grace to give back therein the life we have received from them. I commend you to your good angel. Do as much for me who am devotedly yours in Jesus Christ.

✠ "FRANÇOIS,
"*Bishop of Geneva.*"

A few days after, May 3, 1604, having reached Annecy, he wrote her a long letter on the duty of widows.[1] This letter, it is true, is somewhat general in its application, not very confidential, but full of wit and graceful conceits, revealing

clined accepting a gold enamelled ring set with a large and thick sapphire worth fifty crowns, which was also presented to him, saying that although it was not forbidden to take from princes and municipal bodies, yet he would accept nothing, having made a vow to that effect."

[1] He wrote, about the same time, to the city of Dijon a letter which has, unfortunately, been lost. "On this 2d of May, 1604, was read a letter from His Lordship, the Bishop of Geneva, in which he thanks the gentlemen of the city and reminds them to introduce the practice of carrying a canopy over the Blessed Sacrament when it is taken through the city to the sick; and the people are to follow, for this will be the happiness of the city." (*Archives municipales de Dijon, Délibérations du conseil de ville.*)

here and there the saint's penetration. "I saw in Rome," he wrote, "a tree planted by St. Dominic. Everybody goes to see it, and every one cherishes it for the sake of him who planted it. In like manner, having seen in you the tree of the desire of holiness, which Our Lord has planted in your soul, I cherish it tenderly and take pleasure in thinking of it even more now than when I was in your presence. . . . Madame, this desire ought to be in you like the orange-trees on the coast of Genoa, which are almost the whole year round laden with fruit, flowers, and leaves at the same time." After this beautiful introduction, St. Francis de Sales points out to Madame de Chantal the two principal duties of widows, one of which is the love for widowhood, "a love holy and desirable for as many reasons as there are stars in the heavens." The other is to cherish the love of spiritual progress, of courageous and constant advancement in virtue. He insists upon the necessity she has to expand her heart, to free it from that bondage in which it is stifling, to avoid scruples, eagerness, and anxiety; for there is nothing, he says, which so retards the soul on the road to perfection; and, lastly, he tells her to cast herself constantly, but gently, "into the holy Wounds of Jesus Christ." He ends by giving her some practices of devotion, all tending toward liberty of spirit: namely, the love of Our Lord, of Holy Church, that dear and sweet dove which alone can give little doves to the Spouse. "Praise God a hundred times a day," he wrote, "for having made you a child of the Church, in imitation of Mother Teresa, who, when she was dying, often repeated with extreme consolation: 'I am a daughter of the Church.'" To this devout practice, which is not always sufficiently understood by Christians, but which has ever been the great devotion of the saints, he wished to join assiduous prayer for all the pastors and preachers of the Church. "See," he writes, "how they are scattered all over the world. Pray for them, that they may save souls, and whilst praying for them," he adds, "I beg you never to forget me, since Our Lord gives me the desire never to forget you."[1]

[1] Letter of St. Francis de Sales, May 3, 1604. The numerous autograph letters of St. Francis de Sales that we have had in our hands have led us to the conclusion that St. Francis de Sales is yet

This letter came quite opportunely. Since the day upon which Madame de Chantal had disclosed her conscience to St. Francis de Sales, she had suffered much. The fear of having violated her vow greatly tormented her at times. In vain did she seek comfort by recalling the words of the holy Bishop. To her anxiety concerning the past was joined her uncertainty of the future. Ought she to place herself under the direction of St. Francis de Sales? The vision at Bourbilly, the ardent desire she had felt since seeing the holy Bishop to confide to him her soul, the peace that had followed their first interview—were not these so many signs of the will of God? But, on the other hand, could she quit her confessor without violating her vows? These thoughts so preoccupied her that she endured a real martyrdom. One day in particular, the eve of Pentecost, 1604, this martyrdom began and lasted thirty-six consecutive hours. The saint's agony was such that she could neither eat nor sleep. At last, unable to bear it longer, she confided her trouble to Père de Villars, one of the most distinguished members of the Society of Jesus, and to whom she was accustomed to confess in the absence of her director. In Père de Villars

to be known. It is an established fact that the seventeenth century did not pique itself upon an exact reproduction of the texts of manuscripts. With or without a reason, the editors gave only texts arranged to suit their individual fancy. If they followed this plan even in the works of the Fathers of the Church and the Chronicles of the Middle Ages, what more could be expected of Letters published by nuns with the sole view of edifying? Some were abridged, others suppressed. Often the contents of two or three were compressed into one. In almost all, proper names were omitted, and matters of historical or personal interest disappeared, leaving nothing but what might be useful to the soul in general. Nor did they seek to disguise their system, for the reader was notified of it in the preface. The first editors of the Works, and particularly of the Letters of St. Francis de Sales, acted in this manner. This first edition has been servilely reproduced, without reference to the autographs. It is high time that some one should do for St. Francis de Sales what M. de Montmerqué has so well done for Madame de Sévigné. The work would be as useful to true piety as to fine literature. The Abbé de Baudry undertook it; but death overtook him in his task. It is his papers that M. Migne is now publishing in his edition of St. Francis de Sales' Works, the most complete that has yet appeared.

were united rare piety and profound learning. After listening to Madame de Chantal, he responded seriously and positively, as if inspired: "It is the will of God for you to place yourself under the guidance of the Bishop of Geneva. His direction, and not that which you are now following, suits you. He has the Spirit of God and of the Church. By giving you this earthly seraph for a director, God shows that He wishes great things of you." These words calmed her. "It seemed to me," she said, "that a mountain had been lifted from my heart, and I experienced great peace and light. I felt convinced that what he said was the will of God."

But this calm was of short duration. Her director returned to Dijon, saw her, listened to her, and, without blaming her for the confidence she had given to St. Francis de Sales,[1] without even requiring her to discontinue her correspondence with him, insisted that she should not run from one director to another, and that she should have but one guide. In all this he was perfectly right.

Père de Villars did not the less admit the necessity of having only one director, a point never questioned in the Church; but he wished this director to be St. Francis de Sales. The holy widow's embarrassment having increased to a degree that left her no peace, she resolved to make use of the permission granted by her confessor, and write to the holy Bishop of Geneva.

Here commences a correspondence of unparalleled beauty. Unfortunately, it is incomplete. St. Francis de Sales, who, according to his own words, esteemed himself unworthy of corresponding with so great a soul, had carefully preserved and annotated the letters addressed to him by Madame de

[1] Mother de Chaugy and all subsequent biographers of our saint, who have quoted her, say that Madame de Chantal's director, on his return to Dijon, blamed her severely for having had recourse to St. Francis de Sales, and gave her great remorse of conscience for it. (Chaugy, p. 48.—Maupas, p. 49.) This is an error. A letter written by St. Francis de Sales proves it. "All this consoles me," he writes to our saint, "as also the fact you communicate to me, that the Reverend Father whom Our Lord has given you for director *greatly approves* of your having communicated the state of your conscience to me when I was in Dijon, and that he would not disapprove of your writing to me sometimes." (Letter of June 14, 1604.)

Chantal, with the view of making use of them at some future day, when writing her life. He died first. The package of letters was imprudently sent to our saint, who, startled and confused, threw them into the fire. A sister who was present rushed to the hearth and, with great difficulty, succeeded in saving some of them. These and others found elsewhere have all been published, together with those written by St. Francis de Sales, and which had been carefully preserved by Madame de Chantal. They have always been read with never-failing interest. Like the *Confessions of St. Augustine*, the *Works of St. Teresa*, and the *Following of Christ*, these *Letters* bear the seal of a spirit far above the human. Such purity is therein united with such tenderness, such warm-heartedness with detachment so perfect, that nothing more would be necessary to awaken admiration and love for a religion capable of elevating souls to so exalted a height, and of inspiring them with sentiments so sublime.

The study of this correspondence will place before our eyes a spectacle rare in the annals of sanctity—that of a saint directed by a saint. Elsewhere we see saints acting, but we do not see the hand that directs them. We admire their labors, their sacrifices, their devotedness; but a portion of their life, and that the most beautiful, remains in the shade. That portion is their hidden, interior life, known to one alone here below, namely, their confessor, and in which lies the key, the only true explanation of their exterior life. Those thousands of thoughts whispered in the holy tribunal, those troubles, those doubts which are dispelled as they fall upon the sympathetic ear of the confessor, those counsels received, those remedies recommended, in fine, that way traced out by him—all this, in the life of saints, is ordinarily invisible. The sacred veil of the confessional hides them until that last day when all things shall be revealed. Here, on the contrary, St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal, living at a distance from each other, and seeing each other but seldom, scarcely once or twice a year, were obliged to write often, and to confide to paper, the one the sublime secrets of her soul, the other the admirable replies dictated by his wisdom. There is a singular satisfaction in diving into the

secret recesses of a human heart, but what will it not be when the penitent is Madame de Chantal and the confessor the holy Bishop of Geneva!

In reply to Madame de Chantal's letter of May 30, 1604, in which she gave him an account of her troubles of conscience, St. Francis de Sales wrote two long letters.[1] The first, which was to be shown to her director, was written "in all truth and sincerity, as I must always write," said St. Francis de Sales, "but not as freely as this, in which I desire to speak with you heart to heart." In both he insists upon the necessity of having but one guide, to whom the soul ought to be "always and entirely open, like a book," and "whose authority should, in everything and everywhere, be preferred to self-will and even to the advice of any other person." But he maintains that, in the absence of the director, the penitent may have recourse to some one else, for, "certainly, to receive advice and instruction from others and to recur to them in the absence of the director is not contrary to the respect due to him." But he attaches one condition, and that is, "the director and his authority should always be preferred." He even admits that, under certain circumstances, advice may be asked of another, provided it be neither through levity, curiosity, nor love of novelty, and that "the obedience promised remain firm and be preferred." "Stop there, I beg you," he adds, "and do not trouble yourself in the least as to how you should regard me; for all that is but temptation and vain subtlety. What will it avail you to know whether you can keep me for your spiritual father or not, provided you know how my heart is disposed toward you, and that I know yours toward me? I know that you have entire and perfect confidence in my affection. Of that I feel not the least doubt, and it is a consolation to me. Know also, I beg you, and be convinced that I have a strong and extraordinary desire to serve your soul to the full extent of my power."

"I am unable to explain to you," he continues, giving free vent to the effusions of his beautiful soul, "either the quality or the extent of the affection I feel for your spiritual

[1] Letters of June 14 and 24, 1604.

service; but this much I can tell you, that I believe it comes from God, for which reason I nourish it tenderly, and that I see it daily growing and increasing remarkably. If it were becoming in me, I should tell you more about it and with truth; but here I must pause."

The saint does not intimate that there was between Madame de Chantal and himself any other bond than that of charity and true Christian friendship. "Such, then," he says, "such, my dear sister (and allow me to call you by that name, which is that by which the apostles and first Christians expressed the intimate affection they bore one another), such is our bond, such are our chains, which, the more closely they are drawn, the greater liberty and ease they will give us. Consider me then as very closely united with you, and give yourself no anxiety to know more about it, except that the bond which thus unites us is not opposed to any other, even that of a vow. Be, then, perfectly at rest on this point. . . . Obey your first director filially and freely, and make use of me charitably and frankly."

"But I am too lengthy," he adds. "I shall stop, begging the Infant Jesus to render you worthy of these graces and favors, and grant that we may both die for Him, or, at least, in Him. Madame, pray to Him for me, who am very miserable, burdened with self and others, which would be an intolerable load, if He who has already borne me with all my sins on the Cross does not still bear me to heaven. I never say Mass without you, and, what will please you more, I never communicate without you. In fine, I am as entirely yours as you could wish. Guard against anxiety, melancholy, and scruples. You would not, for anything in the world, offend God, and this is enough to make you live joyously."

The letter concludes with compliments to all the members of the Frémyot family, of whom the saint had carried away with him so sweet a remembrance. "You make no mention of your father's health," he says, "and yet I am extremely desirous to hear; nor of your uncle, to whom I begged you to remember me. And now, since your director permits you to write to me sometimes, do it, I heartily beg you, for, besides being a relief to you, it will be doing me an act of charity. I am in a place and occupation that render me

worthy of some compassion: and amidst the press of tiresome and difficult business, it is a consolation for me to receive news from such as you. It is like dew to me. God give you the grace to live and die in His love, and, if it be His pleasure, for His love! I ask this of Him, and salute you most humbly, giving my blessing to your little children, if you are at Chantal; for if you are in Dijon, I would not presume to do so in the presence of their uncle,[1] although on my departure I was forced into that fault at your request and at the sight of the little ones on their knees. May your heart and your soul ever belong to God! I am, Madame, your most humble and devoted servant."

In spite of these words, Madame de Chantal's troubles continued, or rather, these sweet and prudent words, far from calming her soul, increased her desire to place herself entirely under the direction of the holy Bishop. Père de Villars encouraged this desire, by becoming more positive in his advice upon the point. "I not only tell you," he said, "that you ought to leave this director and place yourself entirely under the direction of the Bishop of Geneva; but I assure you, on the part of God, that, if you do not do so, you will resist the Holy Ghost." A Capuchin of eminent sanctity spoke to her in the same manner: "Madame, delay no longer. Place yourself under the direction of the Bishop of Geneva. If God were to send you miraculously His own Spirit to guide you, He would not do it more surely than through this excellent prelate." Urged by these words and by the divine attraction, which day by day became more lively, she wrote letter after letter to the holy Bishop, entreating him to take charge of her soul. St. Francis de Sales was in no hurry to grant her petition. The four vows she had made embarrassed him. He could not annul them without deep reflection and the certainty that God willed it. He, consequently, wrote to our saint that the matter was of too serious a nature to be decided at a distance, and that he would be glad to see her before giving a final answer. Thonon was first fixed upon as the place of meeting; but afterward Saint-Claude was chosen. Madame de Boisy had

[1] His Lordship, André Frémyot, Archbishop of Bourges.

made a vow to visit that sanctuary, as we have already said, and St. Francis de Sales intended to accompany her.

On the eve of her departure, Madame de Chantal went to Fontaine-lez-Dijon, St. Bernard's birthplace, to commend her journey to God. She had hardly entered the church when she was, as it were, suddenly rapt in God, and the remembrance of a vision she had formerly had came to her mind. One morning, as she lay half asleep, it seemed to her as if she were in a chariot full of travellers, and that she passed before a church in which there was a crowd of devout and attentive worshippers. She wanted to spring out and enter the church by the large door, which was open; but she was repulsed, and she distinctly heard a voice saying to her: "You must pass on further. You will enter into the sacred rest of the children of God only by the gate of Saint-Claude." She did not understand the vision, though it left her a ray of hope that her great tribulations would one day have an end; and, afterward, when tormented by anxiety, she would say to herself: "Patience, my soul! God has promised thee that thou shalt enter into the sacred rest of His children by the gate of Saint-Claude."[1] This vision, coming to her mind at the very time she was about to start for Saint-Claude, filled her with consolation and hope. She felt sure that God had great favors in store for her.

She reached Saint-Claude on the 21st of August, 1604,[2] accompanied by Lady Bruslard. St. Francis de Sales and his mother arrived the same day. That very evening the man of God took Madame de Chantal aside, and made her

[1] This vision is related by Mother de Chantal herself in the *Mémoires* before quoted. Several witnesses at the process of her canonization declared that they learned it from her own mouth. See, in particular, the deposition of the illustrious President Favre, the friend of St. Francis de Sales. Speaking of this vision, he says: "I know all this from having heard the said lady herself tell it." (*Procès de Béatification*, vol. ii. p. 519.)

[2] And not the 24th, as Mother de Chaugy has it; for it was on the 22d that St. Francis de Sales accepted St. Chantal as his penitent. In general, Mother de Chaugy is not sure about all the events of the early part of St. Chantal's life. She had not witnesssd them, knew them only by hearsay, and, writing merely for the sake of edification, she seemed to attach no importance to exact dates.

give him a detailed account of what had passed in her soul since their parting. He listened attentively, and then, merely advising her to leave all to God, bade her good-evening, and retired.

Very early the next morning he went to see her. He seemed weary and faint. "Let us sit down," he said, "I am worn out, I have not slept. I have been working all night at your case. It is, indeed, the will of God that I take upon myself your spiritual direction and that you follow my advice."

After these words, he remained silent a few moments; then, raising his eyes to heaven, he continued: "Madame, shall I tell you? Yes, it must be said, since such is the will of God. The four vows you have made are good for nothing except to destroy your peace of conscience. Do not be astonished at my delay in giving you a decision. I wished to be convinced of the will of God, and that nothing should be done in this matter but what His hand would do."

"I listened to the holy prelate," says Madame de Chantal, "as if a voice from heaven were speaking to me. He seemed to be in ecstasy, so recollected was he, and he appeared to be seeking his words one after another, as if speaking with difficulty."

Next morning before Mass, the Bishop called her into the sacristy and bade her renew her vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity at the Elevation, and to beg her good angel, as also his own, to be witnesses to the act.[1] St. Chantal did so,

[1] In the unpublished *Mémoires* written by Mother Dorothée de Marigny, she asserts that she learned this fact from St. Chantal herself. But she is wrong in saying that it took place on the 28th of August, the feast of St. Augustine. The act itself, drawn up by St. Francis de Sales and written with his own hand, says positively that it was on the 22d of August, the octave of the Assumption of the glorious Virgin Mary. The following is the exact text of this important act:

"I, François de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, accept in the name of God the vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty, now renewed by Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot, my very dear spiritual daughter, and, after having myself repeated the solemn vow of perpetual chastity, made by me on the reception of Holy Orders, which I confirm with all my heart, I protest and promise to guide, assist, serve, and advance the said Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot, my daughter, as carefully, faithfully, and

and the holy Bishop, on his part, whilst elevating the Sacred Host, renewed his vow of chastity and solemnly promised God "to guide, assist, serve, and advance his dear spiritual daughter, Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot, most carefully, faithfully, and holily in the love of God, receiving and looking upon her soul as his own to answer for it before God our Lord."

After Mass, he drew up this act and gave it to our saint, who, until the day of her death, wore it around her neck in a little bag. That same day she commenced her general confession, which she finished on the 25th, the feast of St. Louis. This was a memorable day in her life, for on it, according to the expression of her saintly director, "she renewed her youth like the eagle, plunging into the sea of penance, and promising God that she would be entirely His, body, mind, and heart."[1] St. Francis de Sales, after praising her courageous resolutions, marked out for her a rule of life, changed her manner of prayer, which, like all her intercourse with God, had hitherto been constrained; and, that she might work at her perfection with order and method, specified the virtues she was to labor to acquire.

All this took place in about a week. Madame de Chantal had arrived at Saint-Claude on the 21st of August; on the 28th she was returning to Dijon, her countenance beaming with peace, her heart overflowing with joy and hope.

holily as I can, in the love of God and the perfection of her soul, which from this day I take and look upon as my own, in order to answer for it before God our Saviour, and thus I vow to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, one only true God, to whom be honor, glory, and benediction forever and ever. Amen.

"Made whilst elevating the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, during Holy Mass, in presence of the Divine Majesty, of the most holy Virgin Our Lady, of my good angel and of the angel of the said Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot, my very dear daughter, and of the whole heavenly court, this twenty-second day of August, octave of the Assumption of the glorious Virgin, to whose protection, with all my heart, I commend this my vow, that it may ever be firm, stable, and inviolable. Amen.

"François de Sales,
"*Bishop of Geneva.*"

[1] Letter of St. Francis de Sales, Oct. 14, 1604.

"Never," says Mother de Chaugy in her happy style, "never did a chaste and innocent bee return so happy to its hive, after having gathered the dew of heaven from the flowers." [1]

Her first thought, after reaching Dijon, was to visit Notre-Dame-d'Étang, in order to thank God and His Blessed Mother for the graces she had received at Saint-Claude. With abundant tears she renewed all her vows, particularly that of obedience, wrote out the act of renovation and signed it on the altar with her blood.[2]

It would seem that Madame de Chantal ought now to have found peace. But such was the delicacy of her conscience, that, after all the precautions she had taken before changing her director, after St. Francis de Sales' long and prudent delay, after so many prayers and mature reflection, she was still disquieted. This proved her to be very different from those frivolous persons who are always changing confessors under the pretext of finding better guides, though it is, in reality, only to discover weaker ones whom they themselves may lead. St. Francis de Sales was again obliged to write her a long letter, which circumstance is not to be regretted; for, among all his letters, this is, perhaps, the most beautiful and useful.

"The choice you have made of me for your spiritual guide," he wrote, "has all the marks of a good and just election. No longer doubt of this, I beg you. The powerful interior impulse that led you to it almost by force and yet with conso-

[1] *Mémoires*, p. 55.

[2] Here is a copy of this important act, which she generally wore around her neck in a bag: "Omnipotent and Eternal Lord, I, Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot, although most unworthy to appear in Thy divine presence, confiding in Thy infinite goodness and mercy, make to Thy Divine Majesty, in presence of the glorious Virgin Mary and of all Thy heavenly and triumphant court, the vow of perpetual chastity. I vow, also, obedience to His Lordship, the Bishop of Geneva, without prejudice to the authority of lawful superiors; most humbly entreating Thy infinite goodness and clemency, by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, to receive this act as a sweet-smelling holocaust; and since it has been Thy good pleasure to give me the grace to desire and offer it, deign, also, to give me abundant grace to accomplish it. Amen.

"Written at Notre-Dame-d'Étang, September 2, 1604.

"JEANNE-FRANÇOISE FRÉMYOT."

lation; the deep consideration I gave to it before consenting; the fact that neither you nor I trusted in ourselves, but submitted it to the judgment of your good, learned, and prudent confessor; the time allowed for your first troubles of conscience to subside, had they been ill-founded; the prayers, not of one or two days, but of many months, which preceded the decision, are undoubtedly infallible marks that it was the will of God. . . . Stop, then, I beseech you, and dispute no longer with the enemy on the subject. Tell him boldly that it is God who willed it and who brought it about."

Madame de Chantal's great delicacy induced her to express the fear that she might be a burden to the holy Bishop in the midst of his numerous occupations. St. Francis de Sales, to remove this apprehension and lead her to open her heart to confidence, allowed her to see something of the esteem and holy affection with which God had inspired him for her. "Know, my dearest sister," he wrote, "that the very first time you conferred with me about your interior, God gave me a great love for your soul. After you had spoken to me more confidentially, your confidence became a strong bond that led my soul to cherish yours more and more. This made me write to you that God had given me to you; not believing there could be anything added to the affection I felt in my soul, above all, when praying for you. But now, my dear child, there has arisen a certain new quality which, it seems to me, cannot be named. No, there is not the least exaggeration in what I say, I speak before the God of my heart and of yours: every affection has its distinctive quality. In what I feel for you there is something particular which I find very consoling and, to tell the whole truth, is to me extremely profitable. Take this for a very true truth, and doubt it no more. I did not intend to say so much, but one word borrows another, and then I think you will make good use of it."

With charming kindness and delicacy he added: "It never used to happen (when pronouncing the words '*Give us*,' '*Grant us*') that my thoughts turned upon any one in particular; but since I left Dijon, when I say '*us*,' several individuals who commended themselves to my prayers come to my mind. Now, you are almost always the first, and,

when not the first, which is very seldom, you are the last, so that I may pause longer with you. Can more than this be said? But for the glory of God, tell this to no one; for I say a little too much about it, although in all truth and simplicity."

"This is certainly enough," he wrote in conclusion, "to answer all suggestions which may hereafter arise, or, at least, to inspire you with courage to despise the author of them, and spit in his face. I will tell you the rest some day, either in this world or in the next."

These letters are a fair specimen of St. Francis de Sales' style. We have already said that they are an admirable monument of the Christian spirit. We should add that they are, also, in a high degree, a monument of French genius. Wit, grace, delicacy, ease, artlessness, and opportuneness, qualities so eminently French, shine on every page and make them most attractive reading for cultivated minds.

But the great and predominating charm of these letters is the glimpse they afford us, as through the crystal transparency of a beautiful sheet of water, of the angelic purity of the friendship that united these two great souls. "I shall say nothing to you of the greatness of my affection for you," wrote St. Francis de Sales to our saint, "but I will tell you that it is beyond all comparison, and that this affection is whiter than snow and purer than the sun." And some time after: "I feel extraordinary sweetness in the affection I bear you. It is strong, indestructible, without measure or reserve; but gentle, tractable, quite pure, very calm, and, in a word, if I am not deceived, all in God." It was truly all in God, of the nature of that transfigured affection that St. Magdalene entertained for Our Lord. All the letters, even the shortest, most secret, and confidential notes, addressed by St. Francis de Sales to Madame de Chantal, have been collected. And what is found in them? Repeated expressions of the greatest affection, but of the most angelic that can be imagined. In the process of canonization of both saints, immense numbers of witnesses were heard, whose depositions comprise twelve folio volumes. They must be read, to form an idea of the inexhaustible pleo-

nasms by which their contemporaries try to depict the modesty, prudence, reserve, unspotted chastity, and angelic purity of these two noble souls. Ah! let not the wicked envy us the happiness of meeting sometimes in history, amid the flood of criminal love that pollutes, and often subverts, society, some drops, at least, of that chaste affection which man lost with his innocence, which he will one day recover in heaven, the virginal perfume of which we may even here below inhale in the lives of the saints.

CHAPTER VII.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES BEGINS TO DIRECT ST. CHANTAL.—RULE OF LIFE FOR A WOMAN OF THE WORLD OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.—MADAME DE CHANTAL'S INTERIOR TROUBLES.

1605.

St. Francis de Sales' first act was to give Madame de Chantal a rule by which she might regulate her actions, and thus be enabled, in view of God, to practise perpetual obedience. Designed for a woman still young, born and reared in high society, the mother of four children, and occupied with the management of a large fortune; composed by a director so wise, so sensible, so great an enemy to exaggeration and excess, this rule merits to be studied in detail and with the greatest attention. It embraces three objects: prayer and the various exercises of piety, penance, and charitable works, and, finally, social and household duties.[1]

St. Francis de Sales begins by appointing the vocal prayers to be said by Madame de Chantal on rising. These are the *Pater*, the *Ave Maria*, the *Credo*, the *Veni Creator*, the *Ave maris Stella*, and the *Angele Dei*. He recommends her to recite them in Latin, the language of the Church, but adds that she will be careful to study their meaning from a good translation.

After these vocal prayers, and before applying to any other occupation, she was to employ some time in meditation, with the preparation and according to the model sent

[1] The text of this *Rule of Life*, written by the hand of St. Francis de Sales, cannot now be found. But, thanks to some difficulty experienced by St. Chantal in the fulfilment of its principal articles, she had hardly returned to Burgundy before she found herself obliged to write to the saint on the subject. In reply, she received a long letter in which its text and spirit are explained, commented upon, and developed. This important letter is dated October 14, 1604.

by him. "That," he says, "will take a full hour."[1] He advises her to choose for the subject of meditation the life and death of Our Lord, and sometimes the four last things; but, in the latter case, he wishes her always to end her meditation by an act of confidence in God, and never to represent death or hell on the one side without the Cross on the other, that, excited to fear by the former, she may be moved to love by the latter. For meditation books he recommends the *Spiritual Exercises* of Tauler and the *Meditations* of St. Bonaventure, truly excellent works, which it is impossible to use without being enlightened and affected, and which have been too much neglected in these latter days.

Every day after meditation, Holy Mass, "and either at

[1] This was the general rule given by St. Francis de Sales to all pious persons under his spiritual direction, though he modified it according to circumstances. To Madame Rose Bourgeois, an invalid never able to leave her room, he wrote: "After you have risen in the morning, you ought to make your meditation and the morning exercise which I have called preparation, being particular that the whole do not last longer than *three quarters of an hour*, for I do not wish the meditation and the exercise to be extended to an hour." (*Œuvres de Saint François de Sales*, vol. ix. 268.) To Lady Bruslard, obliged by her position to mingle much in society, he wrote: "Make meditation every day upon the life and death of Our Lord. . . . It seems to me that, with a half-hour's meditation in the morning, you ought to be satisfied with hearing one Mass every day." (*Œuvres de Saint François de Sales*, vol. viii. 9, 11.) But, later, when Madame Bruslard had made some progress in the Christian life, St. Francis de Sales required more of her: "As to meditation," he wrote to her, "you ought to apply to it more frequently. . . . Make, then, every day a short hour's meditation, in the morning before you go out or in the evening before supper. . . . And be very careful," he added, "not to make it either after dinner or after supper, for that would injure your health." (Id. 230.) Ever the same sweetness in strength, prudence in austerity! If his penitents were very much occupied in the affairs of the world, St. Francis de Sales did not allow them to omit meditation, though he shortened the time to be devoted to it. "It will be sufficient for you," he wrote to a lady, "to employ in meditation a *short half-hour or a quarter of an hour* every day, for this, with raising your heart to God, recalling His Divine Presence, ejaculatory prayers from time to time during the day, will be quite enough to keep your heart closely united with the Divine Object of your love; and this meditation may even be made during Mass, to gain time." (Id. xi. 484.)

Mass or in the course of the day, the recitation of the Rosary as devoutly as possible." During the day, "ardent ejaculatory prayers, particularly when the clock strikes, is a useful devotion."

"I like spiritual canticles also," he adds, "but sung devoutly."

In the evening, before supper, he recommends "a little consideration, with *five Paters and Aves* in honor of the five Wounds of Our Lord." This "*little consideration*" is the *Particular Examen*, the importance of which St. Ignatius had so admirably explained, the use of which St. Teresa had restored to the cloister, and which St. Francis de Sales was to popularize even among seculars. That Madame de Chantal may draw more fruit from this exercise, he advises her to add to it "a few minutes' spiritual entrance into one of the five Wounds of Our Lord on the five first days of the week, on the sixth into the Wounds of His thorny crown, and on the seventh into His pierced side;" "for," he adds, "the week must commence and finish in the same way, that is, on Sundays return to the Heart."

"In the evening," he says, "a full half-hour of spiritual reading. That is quite enough for each day." The spiritual books he mentions are: "*Père de Grenada*," which he recommended to every one of his penitents; "*Gerson*," that is, "*The Following of Christ*," which St. Francis de Sales, according to the opinion of those times, attributed to Chancellor Gerson, but which very probably is not the work of that celebrated writer; the "*Life of Jesus Christ, translated by Ludolphus, the Carthusian*," a book very rare at the present day, but which can and which ought to be replaced by one of the "Lives" of Jesus Christ which have appeared in our day (for what kind of a Christian is he who has not in his room the *Life* of his Saviour and his God?); "*Mère Thérèse*," that is, the works of St. Teresa, not then canonized, which are golden reading for those that know how to use them well; and, finally, the "*Treatise on Affliction*," a little book composed by Père Ribadeneyra, which suited the sad turn the thoughts of Madame de Chantal had taken since her husband's death, and particularly since God had begun to purify her by crucifying her.

St. Francis de Sales wishes her to retire "about an hour or an hour and a half after supper" and finish her day, as she had commenced it, by some vocal prayers.

Whilst thus marking for Madame de Chantal the principal exercises of her day, St. Francis de Sales did not forget to explain the spirit that should vivify them. "Do all this," he says, "without eagerness, and in a spirit of gentleness and love. . . . If you should happen to omit anything of what I have prescribed, have no scruple, for behold the rule of our obedience written in large letters:

WE SHOULD DO ALL FOR LOVE AND NOTHING BY CONSTRAINT. WE MUST LOVE OBEDIENCE MORE THAN WE FEAR DISOBEDIENCE.

"I leave you the spirit of liberty, not that which banishes obedience, for that is the liberty of the flesh, but that which banishes constraint, scrupulosity, and eagerness. Should any just and charitable cause occur for you to omit your exercises, I wish you to consider that cause as a kind of obedience, and let the omission be supplied by love."

He returns several times to this principle, as he knew Madame de Chantal to be very fervent and very exact, too much so, perhaps, at first. He enters, therefore, into the closest details upon the spirit of liberty in which he wishes to exercise her. "For example," he says, "if one who is attached to the exercise of meditation be interrupted in it, you will see him leave it with vexation, anxiety, and surprise. Another, who possesses true liberty, will meet the interruption with a smiling countenance and undisturbed heart, for it is all the same to him whether he serves God by meditating or by assisting his neighbor. . . . And, in this respect, I wish you to think of Cardinal Borromeus, who will be canonized in a few days. His spirit was the most exact, rigid, and austere that can be imagined; he drank only water and ate only bread. . . . And yet this rigorous spirit, when he ate with his neighbors, the Swiss, as he often did, in order to win them to a better life, made no difficulty in drinking with them and toasting them at every meal, even after he had allayed his thirst. This is an example of holy liberty in the most austere man of his age. A dissolute

spirit would have gone too far. A contracted spirit would have looked upon it as a mortal sin. A spirit of liberty does it through charity.

"Père Ignatius of Loyola, who is about to be canonized, ate meat on Holy Wednesday at the simple prescription of the physician, who thought it expedient for a slight illness he had. A contracted spirit would have required three days' entreaty before doing so."

By these and many other examples, St. Francis de Sales taught Madame de Chantal that agreeable way of expansion of heart and holy liberty of which she had learned nothing from her former director. It was in this way, also, that he tried to preserve her from the two great rocks upon which so many pious persons are wrecked, namely, either inconstancy, which makes them abandon their pious exercises for trifles, or want of liberty, which makes them unwilling to omit them, even at the call of charity or necessity. The first of these defects was little to be feared for Madame de Chantal; but she was constantly borne to the second by the natural bent of her character, which the injudicious guidance of her former director had increased.

After regulating her prayers and exercises of piety, St. Francis de Sales turns his attention to her penances and works of charity. He directs her to fast on Friday, to sup sparingly on Saturday, and to use the discipline twice a week. "For the ass, I approve the fasting of Friday and the light supper on Saturday. I approve of mortifying it during the week, not so much by the retrenchment of food (temperance being always observed) as by retrenchment of the choice of food. I approve, however, of humoring it by giving it oats to eat, as St. Francis did, in order to make it go faster. The discipline, only twice a week, by pricking the flesh, is of wonderful efficacy in rousing the spirit."

Some may be astonished at seeing the gentle and prudent St. Francis de Sales ordering the discipline "twice a week" to a lady of the world, still young, of a delicate constitution, and the mother of four children. And yet, he is not satisfied with "twice a week." He prescribes it from time to time, as a penance or remedy. Speaking to Madame de Chantal of her temptations against faith, he says: "It will

be good sometimes to take fifty or sixty strokes of the discipline, or thirty, according as you feel inclined. The good this prescription has done to a person whom I know is wonderful." Besides, if we read attentively the works of St. Francis de Sales, we shall see that he prescribes the discipline not only to Madame de Chantal, which might lead to the supposition that hers was an exceptional case, but to Madame Bruslard, Madame de la Fléchére, President Favre, M. and Madame de Blonay, although engaged in the world and living in the married state; and even for Mademoiselle de Blonay, scarcely sixteen years old; Mademoiselle de la Roche, who was very little older; for Mademoiselle Favre and Mademoiselle de Beaumont, who, it is true, afterward became excellent religious, but who, at that time, had no such thought, nay, who were on the eve of marrying. Nor does St. Francis de Sales stand alone in this. St. Charles Borromeus, St. Philip Neri, Cardinal Bona, St. Vincent de Paul, M. Olier, and all the holy directors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries recommended it. That great epoch adhered to the austere traditions of the ages of faith. The Christian world had not yet felt the blight of the lukewarm doctrine of modern times which, by retrenching the mortification of the flesh, was to lead to a gradual undermining of all self-denial.

To the penance which renders life serious, St. Francis de Sales joins in his rule works of charity which render it fruitful. He says but few words on the subject, but they are beautiful: "Perform little acts of charity, but with great humility. I like visiting the sick, old men and women (he is speaking to a woman), and young men, too, when they are *very* young. I like visiting the poor, especially women, with great humility and kindness."

Here we have humility in devotedness, gentleness toward the poor, prudence in visiting the sick. Women should visit women or the aged, rarely young men (if they themselves are young), unless great necessity supervenes. What delicate and sound advice! One saint gives it to another saint! The friends of the poor should weigh it well.[1]

[1] He wrote in a similar manner to Madame Bruslard: "I wish you to take the trouble sometimes to visit the hospitals, console the sick,

After regulating her prayers, penance, and works of charity, St. Francis de Sales is careful not to forget her duties as a daughter, a mother, and a member of society. Her children were beginning to grow. Celse-Bénigne, the eldest, was entering his tenth year, and Marie-Aimée, the second, was eight years old. Françoise and Charlotte were younger. St. Francis de Sales does not yet touch in detail on the subject of an education only in its commencement, and which is, besides, in the hands of such a mother. However, he occasionally lets fall some wise and pleasing advice, which ought to be noted. After blessing God for Madame de Chantal's great desire to rear her children in the love of God, and after advising her to read St. Jerome's *Letters* and, particularly, the *Confessions of St. Augustine*, where he tells her she "will see St. Monica as a widow with the care of her Augustine, and several other things that will console her," he lays down two rules of great importance. First, he wishes each child to have its own little bed, and that not only Celse-Bénigne, who is already large, but each of the three little girls "shall sleep alone as far as is possible, or with persons in whom you feel as much confidence as in yourself. It is incredible," he continues, "how useful this advice is. Experience daily recommends it to me." To this wise precaution for the protection of their innocence, he advises her to join great earnestness and promptitude in gaining possession of their little thoughts and growing affections, in order to turn them toward God. Deferring to a later period particulars and details, he rapidly notes the point upon which Madame de Chantal ought to insist in the education of her son and daughters. "As to Celse-Bénigne," he says, "you must inspire him with generous motives, and plant in his little soul a noble and valiant desire to serve

look upon their infirmities, sympathize with them, and pray for them whilst rendering them some assistance." But then follows the prudent corrective: "In all this be careful that your husband, servants, and relatives may have no cause to take offence at your staying too long in church and neglecting your household duties." Then comes this golden maxim: "Your husband will love your devotion, if, in proportion to its increase, you become more affable and affectionate toward him. (Letter of St. Francis de Sales to Madame Bruslard. Edition Migne, vol. v. p. 549.)

God, making small account to him of mere worldly glory." Speaking of the girls, he says: "Remove vanity from their soul. It is almost inherent in their sex." Alas! how little are these golden rules of education understood at the present day! Fathers excite ambition in the breast of their sons, and daughters learn vanity at their mother's knee!

But, whilst pointing out the two chief wounds which Madame de Chantal was to cicatrize in her children's hearts, the saint takes care to add: "Do all this little by little, slowly, gently, as the angels do, by pleasing suggestions and without harshness."

The rules he then traces with regard to her duties toward her father and father-in-law are not less wise. "I approve your dividing your time between your father and father-in-law, and that you try to benefit their souls after the manner of the angels, as I have said. . . . Try to make yourself daily more agreeable and humble to both, and labor at their salvation in a spirit of meekness.

"You owe to your respected father the great charity of assisting him to a happy end. Nothing should prevent you from applying thereto with humble zeal, for he is the first neighbor God commands you to love. The first thing that you ought to love in him is his soul, and in his soul his conscience, and in his conscience purity, and in this purity solicitude for his eternal salvation.

"I say the same with regard to your father-in-law. As to the means of attaining this end, my advice (with respect to your father) lies in two points: one is, that he make a general review of his whole life in order to do general penance for it. This is a thing without which no honorable man ought to die. The other is, that he endeavor, little by little, to wean his affections from the world. Assist him to understand and practise this advice."

The expressions "like the angels," "as the angels do," which constantly recur in the recommendations of St. Francis de Sales, constitute the whole system, the whole method of the saintly director. He means by it a peculiar mixture of kindness, sweetness, firmness, patience, amiability, and holy tact, truly admirable, and which he inculcated with consummate skill to those under his direction.

It was thus that he brought back so many souls to God and made piety flourish everywhere, by restoring to it its solidity and its charm.[1]

After laying down these precepts, St. Francis de Sales proposes a model. He chooses St. Louis, King of France, whose beautiful life presents so perfect an example of the manner in which a person ought to conduct himself in the midst of the world. "Be devout to St. Louis," he says. "He was a king at the age of twelve, he had nine children, he was constantly engaged in war, he reigned over forty years; and, at the end of all this, his confessor, a holy man who had heard his confessions during his whole life, swore

[1] All whom St. Francis de Sales directed were not so discreet as Madame de Chantal. He found some who wished to sacrifice the duties of their state and the claims of their family to their devotion. The saint was then inflexible. In a letter addressed by him to St. Chantal's pious friend, Madame Bruslard, who possessed a more eager, more ardent, but less prudent disposition than she, the true spirit of St. Francis de Sales and of the Church appears in full light. This lady complained to him of the meddlesomeness of her father and husband: "Perhaps you have given your good father and your kind husband some reason to meddle with and oppose your devotion. How can I tell? It may be that you are a little too anxious, that you make too much ado, and that you have undertaken to urge and control them. If so, this is, without doubt, the cause of their interference. We should endeavor, as far as possible, to prevent our devotion from annoying others. Now, I will tell you what you are to do.

"When you can receive Holy Communion without troubling your two superiors (your father and your husband), do so according to the advice of your confessor. When you fear annoying them, be content with making a spiritual Communion; and, believe me, this depriving yourself of God will be exceedingly pleasing to God, and will draw Him far into your heart. We must sometimes step back, in order to take a better leap.

"I know a lady, one of the greatest souls I have ever met, who lived for a long time in so great subjection to her husband's whims, that even when she was the most fervent and devout, she was obliged to wear her dress cut low in the neck and load herself with vain trinkets. She never communicated except at Easter, and then secretly, otherwise she would have excited a thousand storms at home. By this road she attained very high perfection, as I know, having often heard her confession." (Letter to Madame Bruslard. Edition Migne, vol. v. p. 545.)

that he had never found him guilty of mortal sin. He made two voyages across the sea. In both he lost his army, and in the last he died of the plague, after having long visited, assisted, and nursed his pest-stricken soldiers, dressing their wounds and curing their diseases. He died cheerfully and trustingly, with a verse of the Psalms of David on his lips. I give you this saint for your special patron during this year. Next year, God willing, I will give you another, after you shall have drawn profit in the school of this one."

As soon as Madame de Chantal received this wise rule, so admirably suited to her wants, so plainly filled with the spirit of God, she commenced to practise it with that earnestness which characterized her, especially when applying to divine things. Her ardor, we must acknowledge (for we must render a faithful account of St. Chantal's character), was excessive. It was wanting in that moderation which we admire in her later. Vehemently desirous of perfection, she could catch not even a glimpse of it without enthusiastically and eagerly pursuing it. She frequently failed to reach it; sometimes she passed beyond it. In either case she suffered much. Her holy director had to explain to her this state, which she did not understand, to analyze the depths of her soul with singular clearness, and, having shown her its wounds, indicate their remedies. This is, in fact, the wonderful mission of the director. He dives into souls that know not themselves, he reveals them to themselves, he enlightens their darkness, he shows them the secret causes of their difficulties, he sometimes cures them, but always consoles and strengthens them.

"There is something in me," wrote Madame de Chantal to St. Francis de Sales, "that has never been satisfied; but I cannot tell what it is." "I wish I knew," replied St. Francis de Sales, "that I might tell you; however, may it not be, perhaps, a multitude of desires that is hindering the progress of your soul?" And he added with charming grace: "I, too, have been sick with that disease." [1]

This is, indeed, the disease of all beginners. When a person determines to practise virtue, he feels at first the

[1] Unpublished letter, dated Nov. 21, 1604.

most ardent desires after good; but, to keep him humble, to make him conscious of his impotence and the need he has of Him, God does not always and at the very outset give to his will strength proportioned to his attraction or sufficient to execute what he desires. Then a painful state begins for the soul. Tormented with great attractions to virtue, but too weak to follow them, it becomes agitated, it fatigues itself in a struggle that is not entirely fruitless. Sometimes this state lasts many years, until activity too human is destroyed, and the necessary humility solidly established.

St. Francis de Sales wrote several letters full of appropriate comparisons and beautiful expressions, to explain to Madame de Chantal the unknown state into which she was entering. He compared her to a dove that wants to fly before it has wings, or to a bird fastened to a perch, flapping its wings and vainly struggling to free itself. "Do not struggle," he added, "do not be in a hurry to fly. Have patience until you have wings to fly like the dove. I greatly fear that you are a little too anxious for prey, that you are eager, that you multiply your desires a little too fast."

After pointing out the wound, he describes it wonderfully well. "You see the beauty of inspirations, the benefit of resolutions. It seems to you that you are about to seize them, and the proximity of the good excites your desire for it. This desire impels you and makes you dart after it, but in vain; for the Master keeps you fastened to the perch. Or it may be, you have no wings as yet, and this continual struggling of your heart is wasting you and steadily undermining your strength. . . . Carefully examine your manner of acting in this respect. Perhaps you will find that your mind is too much bent upon the desire of that supreme savor which virtue affords the soul. This eagerness is a defect in you. It is that something which is not satisfied, for it is a want of resignation. You indeed resign yourself, but it is with a *but*. You long very much to have *this* and *that*, and you struggle to obtain them."

Many a soul will recognize itself in this masterly portrait. Here, now, is the remedy: "As a remedy for this, my child, since you have not yet wings to fly, do not struggle, do not be eager, have patience until your wings grow." And again:

"Efforts should be made, but moderate efforts, no struggling, no excitement." Again: "Now, then, be quiet, do not hurry. You will see that you will be the better for it, and your wings will grow faster. . . ." Lastly: "A simple desire is not contrary to resignation, but this panting of the heart, this flapping of the wings, this agitation of the will, those innumerable yearnings—all, undoubtedly, prove a want of resignation." He terminated the letter with the following eloquent comparison to Moses, who from the mountain-top saw the Promised Land for which he had so earnestly longed, but who died without entering it. "He had your glass of water to his lips," wrote St. Francis de Sales, "but he could not drink it. O God! what sighs did he not utter! And yet, he died there more happily than many who really entered the Promised Land, since Almighty God Himself did him the honor to bury him."

Such counsels are very different from those given to Madame de Chantal by her first director, and which made her suffer so much. We do not find in them those urgent promptings, excellent, indeed, for an indolent and tepid person, but highly imprudent when addressed to such a character as our saint. Neither do they betray that zeal of the director which, added to the already excessive fervor of the penitent, incites her to exertions that exhaust her. We behold no devout exercises, so multiplied and absorbing as to fatigue the mind, no bonds that stifle and constrain the soul already too much inclined that way. St. Francis de Sales followed an entirely different course. Instead of spurring his penitent on, he restrained her, moderated her natural eagerness, and calmed her anxiety. His particular aim was to dilate her heart. The principle upon which he most insists, most frequently repeats, which terminates nearly all his letters, and which he presents to her consideration by recommending for her reading and meditation those spiritual books that treat the subject thoroughly, is, that there should be no anxiety in the practice of virtue; that it should be performed energetically, frankly, simply, in one word, with all liberty and confidence; that it ought to be the same with the directions and advice coming from him; that the words "*Do this, think no more of that,*" should not be taken liter-

ally, but in a *general sense*, in all *liberty and confidence*. "As much as I fear the spirit of constraint and melancholy, so much do I wish, my dear daughter, that you should have a heart great and noble, truly joyous in the way of the Lord."[1]

Madame de Chantal stood in need of such direction. To the exterior troubles that rendered her position at Monthelon so crucifying were added interior pains, which, increasing daily, caused her many sad and anxious moments. Toward the close of 1604 she was attacked by horrible temptations against faith, doubts about the most adorable mysteries, and particularly of the divine origin of the Church. If these temptations decreased at times, it was only to make way for spiritual darkness and impotence, great desolation and utter disgust for the practice of virtue. In vain did she apply to meditation; her mind, so active about other things, now became heavy and dull. When she tried to make acts of divine love, her heart seemed to be of marble. The very name of God chilled her. The result of this was an indescribable state of spiritual desolation, which St. Francis de Sales, with all his learning as a theologian and all his solicitude as a director, could scarcely relieve.

"You should not believe, my dearest child," he wrote on February 18, 1605, at the very beginning of this trial, "that temptations against faith and the Church come from God. Who has ever taught you that God is the Author of them? . . . Suggestions of blasphemy, infidelity, and unbelief—ah! no, they can never come from our good God. His breast is too pure to conceive such things. . . . It is the devil who is encompassing our soul, prowling around it, perplexing it, to see if he can find an open door. He did the same with Job, St. Antony, St. Catherine of Siena, and many other good souls whom I know, and with my own, which is good for nothing and which I do not know. And what! my good child, will you let this grieve you? Let him lurk in vain, but do you keep the avenues well closed. He will tire at last; or, if he does not tire, God will force him to raise the

[1] See in particular, among the published Letters of St. Francis de Sales, that dated Nov. 1, 1605, and, among the unpublished ones, that of the 7th of March, 1606.

siege. Remember what I have already told you. I think it is a good sign when he makes such noise and storms around the will; it is a sign that he has not gained entrance."

The sovereign remedy for this kind of temptation is contempt. The less attention paid to it, the more quickly it will disappear. But this was the very point so difficult to the eager character and delicate conscience of Madame de Chantal. She was always imagining that she had either encouraged such temptations or consented to them. "Your temptations against faith have returned," St. Francis de Sales wrote to her five months later, "and, although you do not reply a single word to them, they importune you. You do not reply to them? That is well, my child. But you think too much of them, you fear them too much, you dread them too much; otherwise, they could do you no harm. You are too sensitive to these temptations. You love your faith, you would not have a single thought against it rise in your mind; and as soon as you are conscious of one, you become sad and troubled. You are too jealous of this purity of faith. It seems to you that everything mars it. No, no, my child, let the wind blow, and do not take the rustling of leaves for the clashing of arms. . . . I was near a bee-hive the other day, and some of the bees lighted on my face. I was raising my hand to drive them away, when a peasant said to me: 'No, do not be afraid, let them alone. They will not hurt you. But if you touch them they will sting you!' I acted on his word, and not a single one stung me. Believe me. Do not fear these temptations, do not touch them. They will do you no harm. Pass on, and do not dally with them." [1]

St. Francis de Sales repeatedly returned to this fundamental counsel of despising temptations against faith. He insists upon it repeatedly, on account of the ardent and impetuous nature of the saint. "Come, come! my child! courage!" he wrote to her. "Keep your heart ever turned to its Jesus, and let the cur bark at the gate as long as he pleases." Six weeks later he sent her the following eloquent lines: "Be courageous with a great and constant

[1] Letter of August 30, 1605.

courage. Do not let a little noise rob you of it, particularly in temptations against faith. Our enemy is a great brawler. Despise him, and let him brawl. Do not dispute with him, but scorn him, for it is all nothing. He roared loudly around the saints, and made many a din. But what of that? They are now seated in the place that he lost, the miserable wretch!" [1]

Whilst teaching her to despise the demon and his assaults, St. Francis de Sales sought to develop in her heart love for Our Lord and that feeling of confidence and abandonment into His hands which is the best of all remedies in the midst of temptation. "Imagine," he wrote to her, "that you see Jesus Christ Crucified in your arms and upon your breast. Kissing His side, say a hundred times: 'Here is my hope, this is the living Source of my happiness. . . . Nothing shall tear me from His love. I hold Him, and I will not let Him go, until He shall have put me in a place of safety.' . . . And with this, my child, what have you to fear? Let storms and tempests come. Live Jesus! you will not perish." [2]

How is it possible that advice so prudent, so suitable to the wants of Madame de Chantal, given so positively, and yet so kindly, should not have consoled and assisted her? Still, it is certain that her temptations continued. In the state of dejection to which her interior trials reduced her, she was heard, at times, to exclaim: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death;" or, falling on her knees, she would cry: "Father, let this chalice pass!" "But," she tells us, "the words had no sooner left my lips than I felt an eager desire to drink that chalice to the dregs, and, turning to Our Lord, I would say: 'My God, have mercy on me! Let not this chalice pass away until I shall have drained it.'" [3]

These moments of fervor were of short duration, for the trial had to take its course, and her anxiety sometimes became so intense as to cast her into a state of dejection. This is often the case with those whom God purifies in the fire of interior tribulations. But how is it possible to be

[1] Letter of November 1, 1605. [2] Letter of August 6, 1606.

[3] De Maupas: *La Vie de la Vénérable Mère Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot, etc.*, p. 58.

united with the God of light, and yet to live in darkness; to possess in the heart a God who is love itself, and yet to feel like marble? Is it not that God has withdrawn from the soul, to leave her thus abandoned? Thence arises a state of spiritual desolation incomprehensible to those that have not experienced it. Our Lord bore this along with all our other crosses. After having endured the treason of Judas, the denial of Peter, the weakness of Pilate, the mockery of Herod, and the blows and spittle of the rabble; after having, in the Garden of Olives, undergone interior sufferings, weariness, sadness, discouragement, and dejection, He was pleased to submit to the hardest trial of all, namely, the apparent desertion of His Heavenly Father, and we hear Him exclaim: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It was toward the middle of 1605 that Madame de Chantal first felt this painful thorn piercing her soul; and, although she was closely united with God, she was sometimes seen almost fainting away from the fear that He was no longer with her.

It was here that St. Francis de Sales displayed tact truly wonderful. We know not which to admire most, the delicacy of feeling which made him sympathize with every pain felt by Madame de Chantal; the deep knowledge he possessed of the human heart and of the writings of the great masters of the spiritual life; or the holy and charming conceits which he employed in almost inexhaustible profusion. He multiplied comparisons to explain the state of her soul, and to make her understand how the apparent absence of God did not destroy her close union with Him. At one time he reminded her of the good thief, whom Our Lord had promised that he should that very day be with Him in Paradise, and yet who was no sooner dead than, that same evening, He took him into hell. "O God of truth!" he wrote, "what must that soul have thought, as he descended into the abyss? I think he must have said: 'No, I shall fear no evil, for Thou, O Lord, art with me.'" [1] At other times he proposed to his desolate penitent the example of St. Magdalene at the foot of the Cross, at the

[1] Letter of October 3, 1605.

moment darkness covered the earth. "Oh! how grieved she must have been not to be able to see her dear Lord any longer!" he wrote. "She stood on tiptoe, she fixed her straining eyes upon Him, but she saw nothing but a faint and indistinct whiteness. And yet she was quite as near to Him as before." [1]

Other comparisons equally felicitous flowed from the pen of St. Francis de Sales,[2] and always led to the same conclusion: "Be quiet, all goes very well. There may be as much darkness as you choose, but we are near the light; as much impotence as you please, but we are at the feet of the All-Powerful. Live Jesus! Let us never separate from Him, whether in darkness or in light." [3]

But, whilst consoling Madame de Chantal, St. Francis de Sales never forgot to humble her. His penetrating eye did not fail to discover at the bottom of all these temptations that root of self-love which, even in the holiest souls, is never entirely destroyed. "It is no great wonder," he wrote to her, "that the mind of a poor little widow should be weak and miserable. What would you wish it to be?—clear-sighted, strong, constant, and unchangeable? Be satisfied that it should be suited to your condition, the mind of a widow, that is to say, vile and abject with every abjection save that of offending God." [4] And again: "Know that you are a poor, pitiful little widow. Love your pitiful condition. Glory in being nothing, since your misery serves as an object for the goodness of God. Among beggars, the most disgusting consider themselves the most fortunate and the most calculated to secure alms. We are nothing but beggars. The most miserable are the best off. God is ever ready to cast a merciful eye upon us." [5]

"I lately saw a widow following the Blessed Sacrament," he continues, with that sweet simplicity all his own, "and whilst the others carried large torches of white wax, she had only a little candle, which, perhaps, she had made herself; and, moreover, the wind blew it out. But that circumstance neither impelled her to nor repelled her from the

[1] Letter of June 29, 1606.
[2] Letter of August 6, 1606.
[3] Letter of June 29, 1601.
[4] Letter of June 29, 1606.
[5] Letter of Nov. 1, 1606.

Blessed Sacrament. She entered the church just as soon as the others." [1]

Perhaps we do wrong in quoting thus freely. But there are in these letters so much good sense, so much heart, something so exquisite and profound, and, under their flow of imagination, a knowledge so solid of both God and man, that we never tire reading them ourselves; and when they come under our pen, we know not how to cease transcribing them.

Whatever may have been the assistance Madame de Chantal derived from the letters of her holy director, she believed it necessary to have an interview with him, in order to explain many things that could not well be committed to paper. St. Francis de Sales consented, and appointed for their meeting Sales Castle, three leagues from Annecy. Here dwelt his mother, Madame de Boisy, and a part of her family. Madame de Chantal arrived there on May 21, 1605.[2] St. Francis de Sales, apprised of her coming, went some distance to meet her, and as the carriage was delayed, he passed nearly three hours alone in a barn on the roadside. Here he had a kind of ecstasy, as we may conclude from his own modest account, in which, rapt in God, he foresaw the great things soon to take place.[3]

[1] Letter of June 29, 1606.

[2] "She reached Sales Castle on the 21st of May," says Charles-Auguste. Mother de Chaugy errs in placing her arrival on the 29th, which was the feast of Pentecost.

[3] The following fact will enable the reader to form an idea of the truthfulness of the saints, and inspire him with confidence in what is related of them. The incidents of St. Francis de Sales' life had been collected in several *mémoires* and submitted to St. Chantal for revision and correction. In one of them it was affirmed that St. Francis de Sales, whilst waiting on the roadside, had a real ecstasy. The assertion alarmed St. Chantal, and she immediately wrote as follows: "I see in this *mémoire* mention made of an ecstasy, and I think I may have been the cause of the statement, either because I did not express myself well, or because they have forgotten what I said. I have written to the author of the *mémoire*, to find out where he learned this fact. If he got it from good authority, I shall inform your reverence of it; if not, this is the truth of the matter. . . ." And she explains that St. Francis de Sales remained alone three hours on the road "with some wonderful thoughts and a foreshadow-

St. Chantal made another general confession. She unfolded her conscience with so extraordinary a perception of God that St. Francis de Sales was transported with joy. Soon a holy fervor took possession of both, and they poured out their heart in words not of earth.

"Do you, then, wish to serve Jesus Christ in good earnest?" asked St. Francis de Sales.

"In good earnest," was the answer.

"Then, you dedicate yourself entirely to the pure love of God?"

"Entirely, that it may consume me and transform me into itself."

"Do you consecrate yourself unreservedly to it?"

"Yes. I consecrate myself to it without reserve."

"Do you despise the whole world as filth and ordure, in order to possess Jesus Christ and His grace?"

"I despise it with my whole soul, and I hold it in horror."

"Finally, my child, do you, then, desire anything but God alone?"

"No, no, nothing but Him for time and eternity."

In one of these heavenly conversations, St. Francis de Sales, ravished with joy at the sight of the torrents of grace flowing in her holy soul, said to her in his figurative style: "O my child, my dear child, how it is raining!" She, taking his words literally, and too absorbed in God to notice that the weather was clear, replied quickly: "Let it rain, Father, let it rain!" St. Francis de Sales smiled, and bade her continue.

In all such conversations, there was question of the present alone, none of the future, of the necessity of loving God in the world, never of quitting it. One day, however, the thought of leaving all, of being divested of all things for God's sake, presented itself to Madame de Chantal, and she exclaimed: "O Father, will you not snatch me from the world and from myself?" The answer came earnestly and

ing of something great and extraordinary" concerning the expected arrival; that she did not question him on the subject; but that God then gave the holy Bishop great lights, together with interior consolations and assurances, etc. (*Lettres inédites de Sainte Chantal*, p. 54.) What delicacy! what respect for truth!

slowly: "Yes, one day you will leave all, you will come to me, and I will place you in a state of absolute despoilment of everything for God's sake." But he forbade her to think more about it, telling her to sanctify the present, and confide the future to the guidance of God.

Besides the pleasure of conversing so holily and usefully with her director, Madame de Chantal had another very great happiness at Sales Castle. This was the renewal and strengthening of the acquaintance already made at Saint-Claude with Madame de Boisy. That venerable lady had been the mother of thirteen children. She now lived at Sales Castle, surrounded by all whom God had left her, together with her sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, in peace and union so great as to excite the admiration of the Bishop himself. She soon conceived for Madame de Chantal very special friendship.

The castle of Sales was at that period enlivened and edified by the lispings of a child who afterward became celebrated. This was Charles-Auguste, son of Louis de Sales and Madame de Cussy, he who succeeded his uncle as Bishop of Geneva and wrote his *Life* in most charming style. He was then only seventeen months old, yet every one remarked many points of resemblance between his first words and those that had so clearly indicated the future sanctity of St. Francis de Sales. "Madame de Chantal," says an old biographer, "had been very anxious to see this little child. She took him in her arms and blessed him tenderly, and ever after loved him with a holy affection. She put around his neck a rich reliquary of gold, and the little fellow, who was just beginning to walk and talk, used often to throw himself into her arms and on her lap. It was she who advised his father and mother to take him from his nurse, either because he was old enough to be fed upon more substantial food, or because she had observed that the woman was of an over-hasty disposition. Her advice was followed. On the day he was weaned, public alms were distributed at the gates of the castle, and the three pious ladies had him carried to the church, where the Baroness de Chantal presented him to the priest to be blessed, and all three went to Holy Communion for him. After he had reached the age of manhood, that

excellent Lady de Chantal used often pleasantly to tell him that he was partly her child, since she had weaned him and offered him to God. Charles-Auguste regarded her all his life with esteem, as great as if she had been his mother, and indeed he always gave her that title.

"It was by St. Chantal's advice that Charles-Auguste was sent to the University. Before starting, he went to ask her blessing and receive her counsels. Later, when His Lordship, Jean-François de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, was about to tonsure his nephew, Mother de Chantal gave the young cleric his first cassock and made his first cincture herself, and this on account of the great affection she bore him. Charles-Auguste valued this cincture greatly, and always kept it as a precious relic, wearing it only on great feasts." [1]

But we are anticipating. We shall again meet Charles-Auguste in the parlors of the Visitation; we shall see him a doctor and bishop, seeking advice, prayers, and good example from Mother de Chantal; and we shall, also, see our saint place in his hand that pen with which he wrote the most exact, according to her testimony, and the most charming, in the opinion of men of taste, of all the lives of St. Francis de Sales.

1 *La Maison Naturelle, Historique et Chronologique de Saint François de Sales*, by Nicolas de Hauteville, priest, Doctor in Theology and Canon of the Cathedral of St. Peter at Geneva. Paris, 1669, 4to, p. 380.

CHAPTER VIII.

VISIBLE PROGRESS IN HOLINESS.—MADAME DE CHANTAL MORE ASSIDUOUS IN SERVING THE POOR.

1606.

The progress of Madame de Chantal under the skilful guidance of the holy Bishop of Geneva soon became evident to all. Her high-spirited and eager character was transformed. She advanced rapidly in the practice of humility, meekness, mortification, and patience, virtues so difficult in themselves, so contrary to all her inclinations. Not that she had not hitherto applied, and even successfully, to their exercise, but she now understood them in an entirely different sense. Her present manner of acting charmed all around her.

This advancement was particularly observable on her return from the visit related in the closing pages of the last chapter. Previously to that event, the Baroness de Chantal had had but a glimpse, as it were, of St. Francis de Sales; and, if we except the frequent interchange of letters, she had never had an opportunity to speak with him at leisure. But this time, having had the happiness of spending ten whole days at Sales Castle, a witness of the wonderful operations of grace in her holy director, the veneration she had conceived for him at their very first meeting increased, if possible, and with it that confidence and docility which form the indispensable condition for profiting by spiritual direction. "I saw God dwelling in that saintly pastor in such plenitude," she said, "that, it seems to me, I never looked at him without a feeling of the Divine Presence. I should have considered it a great happiness to give up everything in the world, and become one of the least servants in his house, that I might satiate my soul with the words of life that hourly fell from his lips."

St. Francis de Sales also profited by this opportunity. He had seen very little of Madame de Chantal, and that only in hurried interviews. He now had a chance to observe her more closely. His penetrating eye soon discovered among her admirable qualities some slight defects, the remains of her education in high life. He gently pointed them out to her, and she applied herself earnestly to correct them; for, slight as they were, they veiled the brilliancy of her virtues, and prevented their development.

The very day after her return from Sales Castle, Madame de Chantal gave a proof of the change that had taken place in her ideas respecting the practice of virtue. Hitherto, she had followed the custom, usual with ladies of rank, of being assisted at her toilet by her maid. At five o'clock in the morning she used to call her to light her candle, kindle the fire in winter, and hand her her clothing. The poor girl, always afraid of keeping her mistress waiting, at whatever hour of the night she happened to awake, made strenuous efforts not to fall asleep again. On her return from Sales, Madame de Chantal told her that for the future she would dispense with her services in the morning. It was known that St. Francis de Sales had exacted this reform, and our saint humbly related how it happened. The holy Bishop by chance learned the foregoing details. He went to her at once, administered a gentle reproof, and added: "Your devotion should be so tranquil toward God, and so gracious toward your neighbor, that no one may be importuned or inconvenienced by it. If, early in the morning, you wish to seek God in prayer, is it not reasonable that, in order to find Him the better, you should rise alone without giving unnecessary trouble to those that wait upon you?"

These few words were a light for Madame de Chantal. From that time forward, she not only refrained from calling her maid to assist her in dressing, but she began, also, to dispense with her services in many other respects, as far as practicable. She kindled her own fire, swept her room, made her bed, attended to her clothes, and required nothing of her servants that she could do herself. The short-sighted will imagine that this change must have increased her troubles. Not at all; it restored her to liberty.

She adopted the same manner of acting toward her father-in-law, the old Baron de Chantal. During Lent, for example, she rose very early, mounted her horse, and went to Autun, a distance of two leagues, to hear Mass and the sermon; after which, faithful to St. Francis de Sales' injunction to allow her devotion to inconvenience no one, she left Autun by a back street, not to be stopped on her way, and returned at a quick pace in order to reach the castle just as the old Baron was sitting down to breakfast. She tried in every way to give him not the least cause for complaint.

"After her return from Sales," says Mother de Chaugy, "there was observed in her a holy liberty of spirit, quite new to her, accompanied by great sweetness of manner. Her piety no longer annoyed her neighbor; and this made every one bless our holy Father. They saw that God had raised up that saintly man to make piety agreeable, easy, and practicable to all. The holy widow's servants had the following saying among themselves, as we often heard from their own lips: 'Our lady's first director made her pray only three times a day, and we were all inconvenienced by it; but His Lordship of Geneva makes her pray every hour of the day, and no one is disturbed by it!'"[1]

To put the finishing stroke to Madame de Chantal's virtue, it was necessary to dispel the cloud of sadness which had shrouded her countenance since the death of her husband and the commencement of her interior trials, and which, in spite of herself, was calculated to render her a little disagreeable to those around. It was a difficult undertaking. But St. Francis de Sales felt its importance, and applied himself to it from the first day of his acquaintance with her. We may say that his letters were filled with injunctions to be cheerful. "Be very cheerful," he wrote to her, "very faithful to our dear Jesus." And again: "Be cheerful, be generous! God, whom we love, and to whom we are consecrated, wishes this of us." And in another letter: "You would not, for the whole world, offend God. Is not this enough to make you live joyously?" Sometimes it was but a word at the close of a letter: "Let us be cheerful." At other times, his pen ran on as follows: "Keep yourself joy-

[1] *Mémoires*, i. chap. xvii.

ously humble before God, and humbly joyous before the world. If men esteem you, cheerfully despise their esteem; if not, be joyfully satisfied." And again, this charming characteristic of St. Francis de Sales appears in the following: "Believe me, the Israelites could never sing in Babylon, because they thought of their country; but for my part, I would that we sing everywhere."

These charming counsels, reiterated in the Castle of Sales, began to bear fruit. Madame de Chantal's countenance daily became more cheerful, and song again rose to her lips. She frequently sang the Psalms of David, versified by Philip Desportes, Abbot of Tiron. She carried the book about with her, even when riding around the fields on horseback. She used to hang it in a little bag to her saddle-bow, so that she might sing on her way.

Whilst Madame de Chantal was progressing so rapidly in the spirit of mildness and holy amiability, St. Francis de Sales watched that she should lose nothing of that energy, of that vigor which formed the fundamental characteristic of her soul. He exercised her constantly in self-mortification, in self-conquest, the best use that can be made of moral force; and, besides her accustomed practices of penance, which he himself had authorized, such as the hair-cloth and the discipline, he profited by the ten days' sojourn at Sales to teach her others, more simple, more common, but which, practised courageously and constantly, subject nature more successfully and quickly, perhaps, than either hair-cloth or discipline. "I have heard Mother de Chantal say," writes one of her religious, "that, when in the world, she lived so delicately that she would partake only of certain choice parts of viands. But when a widow and under the direction of our Blessed Father, she overcame her daintiness. 'When I had the honor of eating at his table,' she told us, 'our Blessed Father, although knowing my dislike to certain food, would, when it was on the table, ask me very kindly if I would not take some of it, just as if he were ignorant of my repugnance. I would answer: "My Lord, I have never tasted it:" and he would immediately put some of it on my plate.' Once, for example, knowing her natural aversion to olives, he helped her to some, saying that he

wished her to eat them. She obeyed without hesitation, although with great repugnance." [1]

On her return from Sales, she resolved to continue this practice of mortification, for, in spite of her sanctity, she had never before applied herself to it. With this view, and in order to mortify herself in the choice of food, she appointed one of her lady attendants to take the head of the table. By this means, she was often helped contrary to her taste; but no one ever perceived it, so perfectly had she conquered nature. When there was a dinner-party at the castle, she redoubled her efforts to conceal her self-denial from the guests. She graciously accepted the choice morsels offered her, carefully cut them up, and feigned to eat them with relish. But she had given a hint to one of the servants who, from time to time, adroitly changed her plate, and, in this way, the most delicious parts of the game and fowl were reserved for the poor.[2]

She practised similar mortification in her clothing. We have seen that, after her husband's death, she gave up all the ornaments of her youth and assumed very simple apparel; but she still retained her long and beautiful hair. She frizzed it and powdered it according to the fashion of the day, for "she was attached to it." [3] On her return from Sales, this last offering to vanity, one of the most dearly cherished by her sex, was sacrificed. We do not know whether St. Francis de Sales required her to cut it off; but we do know that he praised her for having done so, and that, a short time after, he encouraged her to greater despoilment. On the 11th of February, 1607, he wrote to her in the following terms: "For over three months I have been thinking that I would write to you that this Lent you would do well to cast off every trace of vanity in your dress. Do so, then, since God has thus inspired you. You will still be fine enough in the eyes of your Spouse." [4]

[1] Process of Canonization: *Mémoires* of Mother Dorothée de Marigny, vol. ii. pp. 976, 992.

[2] Process of Canonization. Deposition of Sister Marie-Aimée de Sonnaz, *super art.* lxxxii.

[3] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, part i. chap. xviii.

[4] Letter of February 11, 1607.

Docile to his advice, Madame de Chantal adopted "a plain head-dress with black trimmings, a crape head-band and black taffeta coif, a very small collar of coarse linen without starch, narrow cuffs about two inches wide, a tammy gown so plain that it was not even trimmed with lace, a skirt of thin black serge, and she never wore silk stockings." [1]

But it was particularly in her intercourse with the poor that her wonderful progress in humility, meekness, mortification, and detachment from all things shone with the greatest brilliancy. She began her stay at Monthelon by a truly heroic act. On Trinity Sunday, in 1604, as she was toward evening taking a walk near the castle, she saw approaching her three young men of very agreeable appearance, who asked her for alms. She found that she had no money with her, nor anything of value excepting a gold ring. But this ring was infinitely dear to her, for it had been worn by her husband, from whose finger she had taken it the very day he died. However, she did not hesitate. She gave it to one of the young men, begging him to divide its worth with his companions. They thanked her most graciously, adding, with an indescribable expression, that they were good friends, and that, by giving to one, she had given to all. At these words, she was suddenly seized with so lively a sentiment of the presence of God that she fell on her knees and kissed their feet with inexpressible joy. When she arose, they had disappeared, nor could it be discovered which way they had gone. From that time, she was so devoted to the poor that she made a vow never to refuse an alms asked of her for the love of God.[2]

Not satisfied with this vow and her former one to devote the labor of her hands to the poor, she commenced to visit them more frequently. She went daily to their huts, even during the excessive heat of summer and the snows of winter. On leaving the castle, she used to excite her own faith and that of her attendants by saying: "We are going to visit Our Lord on Mount Calvary, or in the Garden of Olives, or at the Holy Sepulchre:" diversifying the stations daily in order to furnish divine nourishment to her piety.

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, part i. chap. xviii.

[2] Deposition of Mother Favre de Charmette.

A poor man in her eyes was not only a suffering brother, he was Our Lord Himself, hidden under rags, continuing under this veil, which faith alone can penetrate, His life of humiliation, and thus perpetuating His dolorous Passion. Penetrated with respect for this sacrament of poverty, in which she believed as firmly as in the mystery of the Trinity or of the Holy Eucharist, she approached the poor as if they were kings and queens. She saluted them humbly, and always addressed them most respectfully. She often served them on her knees, and she used to say that God had refused her the honor of being born in poverty.[1]

If she found them in debt or engaged in lawsuits, she paid what they owed and supported their claims. When she went to Dijon, she always carried with her "some bags filled with the papers of her good villagers, in order to consult about them with her father, who kindly did all that she required." Did the poor stand in need of sheets or clothing, she sent immediately to the castle for a supply. "She kept on hand clothes for the poor," says Mother de Chaugy, "and when they came to her wretched, ragged, and covered with vermin, she gave them clothes, which she kept ready-made, gathered up the rags they took off, had them boiled to destroy the vermin, and, with her own hands, mended and patched them. When their clothes had no vermin, but were only torn, she was often seen, in oversleeves and a white apron, spreading them on her table and brushing them. After mending them, she would give them another brushing to make them cleaner for her poor people." [2]

When sickness was added to poverty, Madame de Chantal's charity became even more respectful and tender. There was in a retired part of the castle a small room stored with

[1] This holy manner of regarding the poor, so common in the Middle Ages, had, by no means, disappeared in the sixteenth century. The illustrious D'Aguesseau, speaking of his father and mother, said: "They looked upon the poor *as their children*, so that, if they had ten thousand francs to invest, they invested only eight and gave the remainder to the poor, whom they regarded as their own blood, by an adoption holy and *glorious for them*, since it pleased Jesus Christ Himself *in the number of their children*. . . ."

[2] *Mémoires*, part i. chap. xviii.

drinks, ointments, and remedies, which she herself prepared for the poor. All was so clean and so neatly arranged that when the villagers wished to praise the cleanliness of a house, they used to say: "It is as clean as the dispensary of Madame de Chantal." Before starting on her daily rounds, she supplied herself with the remedies she thought she would need. When she reached the bedside of the sick, "she washed their sores with her own hands, removed the pus and the proud flesh, and dressed them carefully and piously, sometimes performing this act of charity on her knees." "Some of her servants at that time have assured us," says Mother de Chaugy, "that they often saw her kiss the feet of the poor and apply her blessed lips to sores so horrible that the very sight of them made her attendants shudder." [1]

Then she made their bed, swept their room, sat with them a little while, and after wiping their face, if they had fever, she bade them good-bye so affectionately that one would have said it was a mother taking care of her child.

When the sick were near death, she desired to be notified, that she might be present at their last hour, to assist them at that supreme moment by her pious exhortations. The rich solicited the same favor, and as soon as any one in the village was found to be dying, the holy Baroness was immediately sent for. She excelled in consoling the departing soul. If she was absent at the moment the person died, she was even then sent for; "for no one in the house would have dared to lay out the deceased. 'It is the holy Baroness's right,' they would say respectfully. She claimed this favor from the poor in return for the care she had taken of them during their sickness." [2]

On her return from these visits, it was a rare thing for her not to find a number of poor people waiting for her on the stone benches around the castle. Some of them, particularly those who had cancers and whom no one else would attend, had come from a great distance to have their sores dressed by her. She always received them with a smiling

[1] *Mémoires*, part i. chap. xviii.

[2] Deposition of Sister Marie-Philiberte de Monthouz, *super art.* xxviii.

countenance. She declared that "the longest and most tiresome day for her was that on which she had no opportunity to serve the poor." [1]

If anything in the lives of the saints can find favor in the eyes of the world, it ought to be their charity; but the most sublime acts are sometimes the least understood. The conduct of Madame de Chantal soon attracted general blame. Some said she was losing her time; others, that she would do better to take care of her father-in-law. Without entering into any discussion, the pious lady humbly replied that she took nothing from the time she owed her father-in-law, and, "besides," she remarked, "he has both men and women-servants to attend to him, but the poor of Jesus Christ would have no one if I abandoned them." Satisfied with these few words, she disregarded the censure of the world, continued to visit the poor, and to serve those whom the Church so admirably calls the suffering members of Jesus Christ.[2]

The words "the suffering members of Jesus Christ" were not a vague expression for the Baroness de Chantal. She fully comprehended them. They contained a living mystery whose depths she daily penetrated more deeply. By frequent meditation she had conceived an idea of the ineffable relations between the Passion of Jesus Christ upon the Cross and the dolorous passion that every human creature undergoes sooner or later by sickness or adversity. Just as she saw Jesus Christ appealing to her in the persons of the poor, did she see Him suffering in the sick, weeping in the afflicted, and making use, as it were, of their sufferings to continue, though under another form, the expiatory sacrifice that saved the world. Nothing, therefore, could discourage her, nothing make her recoil. Her soul, nourished with these sublime thoughts, mounted upward even to heroism.

One day, among others, a peasant, returning from market at Autun, found in a ditch on the roadside a poor boy, covered with leprosy and abandoned by all. The good man alighted, placed the boy on his horse, to present him, ac-

[1] Deposition of Sister Marie-Aimée de Sonnaz, *super art.* xxviii.

[2] Deposition of Mother Marie-Antoinette de Sacconay, *super art.* lxii.

cording to custom, to the saintly Baroness. She received him with extraordinary joy, and had him put into the bed always kept in readiness for the poor. Then, having rolled up his rags to clean them of vermin, she took the scissors and, with her own hands, cut the hair and anointed the head of the poor leper. She put on him a clean white cap, and went herself to burn the hair without permitting any of her servants to touch it. During his long sickness, she visited him three or four times every day, oiling his head and dressing his sores with unfailing cheerfulness. If she happened to be detained by her father-in-law or visitors whom she could not leave, she charged a servant to carry his food to her poor sick boy. The maid had not the virtue of the mistress. She would hastily set what she had brought near the bed and withdraw, holding her nose. This made the boy cry. He used to say: "When my lady comes, she never holds her nose. She sits near me and teaches me how to save my soul. But when she cannot come, every one else neglects me." The poor child soon died. Madame de Chantal sat up with him whole nights, and procured for him the Sacraments. At the moment of expiring, he turned to her with clasped hands, asking her blessing. She gave it, and embracing him, said: "Go, my child, die in peace. You will be carried, like Lazarus, by angels' hands into the bosom of Abraham." She washed and laid him out herself. One of her cousins, who happened just then to be at Monthelon, and who did not, as she, see Jesus Christ in the poor, said to her in angry and contemptuous words, "Madame, you forget that under the Old Law whoever touched a leper became unclean." "Oh!" was the dignified reply; "but since I read in the Gospel that my Saviour was looked upon as a leper, I have felt no horror for any leprosy but that of sin," and she went on with her task of washing the body of the dead boy. She assisted at his burial, meditating the whole of the ceremony on these words: "God lifteth up the poor out of the dunghill: that He may place him with princes, with the princes of His people" (Ps. cxii. 7, 8).[1]

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 71. Depositions of Mother Favre de Charmette, and of Sister Marie-Antoinette de Sacconay, *super art.* xxiii.

There is related of her at this period a still more beautiful example. Not far from Monthelon lived a young and very beautiful woman who, to please her husband, cut off a wart, which was near her nose and somewhat to the detriment of her beauty. Unfortunately, the operation was not a success. A cancer appeared, and in a short time she became so disfigured that even her husband abandoned her. The poor woman, seeing herself forsaken, had recourse to our holy Baroness, the providence of all the abandoned. Madame de Chantal began at once to dress three times a day the cancer, which, with frightful rapidity, was eating away the woman's face. But all her care was useless. The disease spread to the cheeks and forehead and ate away the flesh until she became a horrible spectacle, and the stench was insupportable. The poor creature was removed to a small room where, for three years and a half, she saw no one excepting Madame de Chantal; for every one else fled the disgusting spectacle. After laying bare the jaw-bones and teeth, the cancer extended, on one side, up to the ears, and on the other, below the chin, so that her face would have resembled a death's-head were it not for the eyes, which, rolling in their fleshless sockets, gave it a still more hideous appearance.

Our saint's relatives made use of every possible means to deter her from caring for this woman. Finding their efforts useless, they determined to notify President Frémyot. They bitterly complained to him of his daughter's imprudence, and exaggerated the danger of her catching the disease and communicating it to her children. M. Frémyot, much excited, wrote a severe letter to Madame de Chantal: "By virtue of the authority and power a father has over his child," were his concluding words, "I forbid you to touch that cancerous woman. If you have no care for yourself, have pity on those four lovely children whom God has left you, and of whom He will demand an account." Madame de Chantal at once obeyed her father's command. She continued to prepare, three times a day, what was necessary for the relief of the sufferer, and she carried it to her room; but she did not *touch* her, her father having forbidden only that.

The poor woman lived only three weeks longer. Such

was the activity of the cancer that, after it had loosened the jaw-bones, it ate a hole in the throat. Through this opening our saint passed a little nourishment by means of an instrument she had made for the purpose. The afflicted woman could no longer utter a single word, and her breath issued through this hole with a distressing sound. She presented a sight calculated to unnerve the most resolute. When she saw death approaching, her only regret was not to be able to receive Holy Communion. Madame de Chantal read this in her eyes, and, not less zealous for her soul than for her body, she prevailed upon the curé to give the dying woman with silver pincers, which she had made expressly for the purpose, a small particle of the Sacred Host through the opening in her throat. About seven minutes after this happy Communion, the poor woman died calmly and piously.[1]

Scarcely was her funeral over, before an old man, covered with boils and the itch, was brought to Madame de Chantal. She took care of him for ten months, at the end of which time, death having claimed him, she prepared his body with her own hands for burial.

Whilst she was thus daily revealing in acts of admirable devotedness her great love for the poor, a visit to Bourbilly unexpectedly called her to the exercise of still more heroic virtue. It was toward the end of September. She had reached Bourbilly just in time to superintend the vintage, when the dysentery suddenly broke out in the village, and it soon numbered many dead and dying. Moved with pity for the poor sufferers, who were in want of everything, she immediately devoted herself with heavenly fervor to their service. Every morning before dawn and after she had made an hour's mental prayer, she went to visit the sick, carry them remedies, and clean their rooms. After that she heard Mass, and then went to visit those that lived at a distance. In the evening, she made a second visit to every house in the village, and, on her return, received from the servants an account of the day's labor and the state of her affairs;

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 72.—Deposition of Mother Favre de Charmette, *super art.* xxiii.

"for her devotions never diminished her vigilance in the administration of her children's property."[1] It often happened that, on her return home, exhausted by fatigue, she was called again to assist the dying; and she would spend the night kneeling at the foot of the bed, praying with the sufferer, waiting upon him like a mother, and exhorting him to a holy death. Seven weeks passed in this manner, during which there was not a day on which she did not wash and lay out with her own hands three or four dead.

But, at last, she succumbed. Fever and dysentery soon reduced her to such a state that her life was despaired of. In this extremity, she had a letter written to her father-in-law, to beg his forgiveness and to confide to him her four little orphans. This duty accomplished, she resigned herself to the will of God, and offered to Him the sacrifice of her life. But her hour had not yet come. One night, whilst she lay at death's door and every one was expecting her agony to begin, she felt inspired to make a vow to the Blessed Virgin, and she was instantly restored to health. She arose, settled her business affairs, mounted her horse, and returned to Monthelon. Her arrival at the old castle was hailed with indescribable joy by her children, who had done nothing but weep since the reception of the letter announcing her sickness. Even her father-in-law manifested his pleasure, for he had been inconsolable at the idea of losing her. "Notwithstanding the persecution she had to undergo at the castle of Monthelon, she was there looked upon as a saint."[2] As soon as her arrival was made known, the inhabitants of the village ran in crowds to welcome her. They knew not how to express their joy. The women and children pressed around her, kissing her hands, and the poor blessed God aloud for having restored to them their mother.

Madame de Chantal was deeply moved and consoled by this proof of affection, and she resumed with fresh zeal among her good people her ordinary routine of spiritual and corporal works of mercy. But we shall not pause longer here, for other wonders are awaiting us. Time has not dimmed the remembrance of the heroic charity exercised by

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 78. [2] De Maupas, p. 79.

our saint. It is still fresh in the hearts of those whose forefathers were witnesses of it. The inhabitants of Bourbilly had surnamed her "*The holy Baroness:*" those of Monthelon called her by a sweeter name, one that seemed to indicate the transformation wrought in her under the direction of the holy Bishop of Geneva. They called her "*Our Good Lady.*"[1] This is the title inscribed on the base of her statue in the church at Monthelon; and this is the name by which they invoke her morning and evening, and even in the most solemn acts of religion. Even at the present day, after the lapse of two centuries, when a peasant from Monthelon enters a church and kneels at the tribunal of penance to confess his sins, he is at once recognized. He always commences thus: "I confess to Almighty God, to the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, to Blessed Michael the Archangel, to Blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, to all the saints, and to our Good Lady."[2]

[1] "*Notre bonne Dame.*"

[2] We have this fact from many priests of Autun and the surrounding villages.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BARONESS DE CHANTAL AS A MOTHER.—HOW SHE REARED HER CHILDREN.—HER FAITHFUL AFFECTION FOR HER DECEASED HUSBAND.—SHE REFUSES A BRILLIANT OFFER OF MARRIAGE.

1607.

The Baroness de Chantal's children, meanwhile, were advancing in age, and her maternal solicitude increased with their growth. She labored with indefatigable zeal to form their mind, their heart, and their conscience. To them she transferred the deep affection with which she had loved her husband, endeavoring thus to supply to them the loss of their father. This chapter will show how well she fulfilled her task. The maternal tenderness with which she watched over them is, perhaps, one of the greatest wonders, and yet, until the present day, the least noticed, of a life abounding in wonders.

Two things may have served to cast a shadow upon this side of the Baroness de Chantal's character. One is the heroic act by which the first part of her life was closed; the other, the manner in which her history has hitherto been written. It would be unpardonable in us to reproach the pious chroniclers who, in the silence of the cloister, so zealously collected and so touchingly and gracefully recorded the actions of their spiritual mother. But a word of regret, at least, may be permitted us. Neither Mother de Chaugy nor any of the Sisters who attested to the life and death of our saint had known her before she embraced the religious state. They have told what they knew and what they saw. They have admirably depicted the religious, the foundress, the saint interiorly crucified with Jesus Christ and raised to the highest degree of union with God; but they have said little of the lady of the world, still less of the wife, and al-

most nothing of the mother. Mother de Chaugy scarcely mentions those little children whom we find on every page of the correspondence between St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal, and who were the objects of maternal solicitude so lively, so untiring, so anxious, that the Bishop was obliged to moderate it. And, even when they are mentioned, it is merely incidentally here and there throughout the narrative. To study our saint under one of the most amiable and instructive aspects of her life, we must open the letters of the director and the penitent, and search among hidden and unpublished matter.

We have already said that her short and happy union of eight years with the Baron de Chantal was blessed with six children. Two died in infancy. Four survived, one son and three daughters.

The son, the eldest, was named Celse-Bénigne, and was now entering his twelfth year. Sprightly and intelligent, well-formed, brave even to rashness, possessing frankness which was to degenerate into rudeness, but which at that age was charming, Celse-Bénigne already gave indications of those qualities which some years later made him, according to the testimony of Bussy-Rabutin, "one of the most accomplished cavaliers of France, in person, mind, and courage." "He was very lively," continues Bussy. "In everything he said there was a dash of humor that amused his hearers. But it was not only this that made him so pleasing, it was the way in which he said it. He was all life."[1] His grandfather, President Frémyot, hoping to leave him his hereditary seat, had destined him for a parliamentary career; but Celse-Bénigne soon evinced so decided a taste for battles and sports, that his grandfather had to abandon the idea and allow him to follow his inclinations. Sent to court, of which he soon became the ornament and the idol, surrounded by a crowd of friends far above him in rank, who spoiled him by their flattery and drew him into adventures in which he risked his head a thousand times, without losing either his honor or his faith, Celse-Bénigne was, in turn, the hope, the joy, the torment, and the supreme sorrow of his mother.

[1] Bussy-Rabutin: *Histoire Généalogique.*

The eldest of the three little girls was named Marie-Aimée. She was one year younger than Celse-Bénigne. She was a charming child. "Although the gifts with which she was endowed appeared then only like the pale streak of the aurora or the buds of a tree giving promise of beautiful flowers, yet every one predicted that this dawning light would break into full day. She was perfectly beautiful. She had a fine figure, a very lovely disposition, a good mind, a solid judgment, and she was exceedingly graceful in all her movements."[1] These natural qualities were enhanced by her piety. "At an age in which other children are capable of only little innocent games and childish thoughts, she was susceptible of the highest reflection. Mental prayer, which belongs but to the perfect, commenced to be her ordinary exercise, and it was wonderful to see this child daily in the chapel, kneeling motionless like a little angel before her mother, her lips moving in vocal prayer, which being finished, she made a full quarter of an hour's mental prayer upon the subject her good mother and spiritual directress had given her, and of which she afterwards rendered a faithful account with wonderful clearness."[2] This rare mixture of natural and supernatural gifts led Madame de Chantal to decide upon educating Marie-Aimée for the world. Indeed, this was the child's own inclination. We shall see her escaping its rocks and behold her die in the bloom of life. A wife at the age of twelve, a widow, a mother, and a religious at nineteen, a novice and a professed nun upon her death-bed, she proved herself, by the beauty of her virtues, the charm of her innocence, and the sublimity of her sentiments at the last hour, the daughter of St. Chantal and the sister-in-law of St. Francis de Sales.

Madame de Chantal's second daughter was named Françoise, but in the somewhat harsh language of our country, they called her Françon. She was a very different child from Marie-Aimée, less given to piety, more sprightly, more impatient, more playful, with a little of her brother's fire. She was strongly inclined to the love of the world, and

[1] *Marie-Aimée de Chantal*, by Mother de Chaugy.

[2] *Notice inédite sur la Baronne de Sales de Thorens, fille aînée de Sainte Jeanne-Françoise* (*Archives d'Annecy*).

possessed all that was necessary to make her one of its stars. "She was gay, playful, beautiful, all soul and enthusiasm, with a noble bearing and agreeable manners. She had not, like Marie-Aimée, those fine and delicate features that charm the eye, but there was about her something noble, something beautiful, that commands admiration; in fine, she possessed charms enough to dazzle others and blind self." [1] Her pious mother was alarmed at this dangerous mixture of fine qualities and defects; and, as one longs to see in port a vessel too frail to brave the storm, she secretly cherished the hope that Françoise would enter the cloister. But, we shall see her later on married to the Count de Toulongeon, gracing society by her amiability and high-toned principles, and calming her mother's fears by the practice of solid virtue in the midst of wealth and dignities.

The third and youngest of Madame de Chantal's daughters was named Charlotte. She was born fifteen days before her father's death, and the first caresses her mother had given her were full of tears. Either on this account, or because Charlotte was really more happily endowed than her sisters, Madame de Chantal had founded on her the highest hopes. "She is an angelic soul," her mother used often to say, "we shall make something good of her." Charlotte was, indeed, all this, and to the close of her short career she displayed the innocence, candor, and ingenuousness of an angel. She was one of those beings whom Almighty God shows to men, but reserves for Himself—flowers of heaven and not of earth, which the jealous Gardener hastens to cull before the breath of human passions bends their tender stalk or tarnishes their brilliancy.

All these children were still very young when St. Francis de Sales came to preach the Lent at Dijon. We know how he loved children. "He used to caress and pet them with the sweetest smile and in the kindest manner possible; and they treated him with equal freedom and confidence." His domestics often wanted to chase away the little crowd of

[1] *Oraison funèbre de la haute et puissante dame Françoise de Rabutin de Chantal, Comtesse de Toulongeon, seconde fille de la Bienheureuse Mère de Chantal.*

children that, the instant he appeared, ran after him, but he would say: "Ah! let them alone, let them come to me." Then, caressing them and patting them on the cheek, he would add: "They are my little people; ah! yes, they are my little people." [1]

From this it may easily be inferred that St. Francis de Sales was not slow in becoming acquainted with Madame de Chantal's children. Not only Celse-Bénigne and Marie-Aimée, but little Françoise herself took the greatest pleasure in watching the saint and listening to him. "When she saw the holy prelate enter the room," says a contemporary, "she used to run, take her place at his feet, and listen to him with a pleasure quite extraordinary in children, who love but play. Seeing this little girl looking at him and listening to him, one would have said that her reason was in advance of her age or her piety in advance of her reason. St. Francis de Sales was charmed with it, and in spite of the sensible presence of God, which filled his mind, in spite of that majestic demeanor which proceeded more from his great virtue than from his episcopal dignity, he could not help lavishing upon her those caresses in which one seems to become a child in order to please children." [2] He did the same towards Celse-Bénigne, Marie-Aimée, and little Charlotte. He mentions them in all his letters, sending now a blessing, and now an affectionate message. "I never salute the angels without saluting yours," he wrote to Madame de Chantal. "Do me a like favor, and Celse-Bénigne too, for whom I always pray, and all your circle." Some time later he wrote: "I commend myself to the short but powerful prayers of Celse-Bénigne, and if Marie-Aimée is beginning to form some good wishes for me, I shall dearly cherish them." And in another letter: "I love our Celse-Bénigne and little Françon. May God be ever their God, and may the angel who has blessed their mother bless them forever!" And again: "I dearly love your little one (Charlotte), since, as you say, she is angelic." In fine, all his letters contain

[1] *La Vie de l' illustrissime François de Sales*, by Père Louis de la Rivière, of the Order of Minims, 1 vol. 12mo. Lyons, 1625.

[2] *Oraison funèbre de Madame Françoise de Rabutin-Chantal.*

kind wishes for the little family which he looked upon as "his own in Our Lord," and whose "short but powerful prayers" he repeatedly asked.

We may readily imagine that St. Francis de Sales' interest in the children was not limited to simple wishes. He was consulted upon everything that regarded their education. Those fears, desires, and hopes, which are the anxious joys of a mother's heart whilst rearing her children, were daily confided to the holy Bishop, and his replies reveal to us the great, earnest, and even eager solicitude of Madame de Chantal for the welfare of her children.

Celse-Bénigne caused her the greatest anxiety. With the germ of the most happy and brilliant qualities, she perceived in him defects which, if allowed to develop, would ruin him. And as she had a vague presentiment that, notwithstanding his grandfather's plans, Celse-Bénigne would probably pass his youth at court or in the army, the future terrified her. She often spoke of it to St. Francis de Sales, who, fully understanding the importance of the work, omitted nothing to assist her to acquit herself worthily of it.

As sometimes happens, it was in the very bosom of her family that she encountered the first difficulties in the education of her son. Neither at Dijon nor at Monthelon was the presence of his grandparents good for him. At Dijon, and we can scarcely credit it, the excellent Archbishop of Bourges was almost an obstacle to the boy's proper training. He loved Celse-Bénigne too much. He laughed at his pranks and witty speeches. He could not dissimulate his joy at having so clever a nephew. Celse-Bénigne saw this, and his natural vanity daily increased under such influence. St. Francis de Sales, informed of the state of affairs by the anxious mother, discreetly touched upon the delicate point. "As regards Celse-Bénigne, I am sure his excellent uncle will pay more attention to the training of his little soul than to that of his exterior. If it were another uncle, I would tell you to take charge of him yourself, that the treasure of innocence might not be lost. Do not neglect to instil into his soul the sweet and gentle odor of devotion, and often commend to his uncle the care of his soul." [1]

[1] Letter of August 6, 1606.

But the great danger was at Monthelon. The old Baron de Chantal, puffed up with his titles, proud of his name and great deeds, was constantly instilling into his young grandson false ideas of true glory, and planting in his soul the germs of pride, arrogance, and independence, which had already led him more than once into open revolt and inconsiderate acts. St. Francis de Sales, in consequence, insisted strongly upon this point. He advised Madame de Chantal "to disparage before him glory purely human," and constantly to show him its vanity, folly, and danger. She was to present religion to him only under its grand and noble aspect, capable of impressing a mind like his, impelled to great things. She was to reveal it to him, above all, in its work of devotedness and generosity, in order to gain his heart after having seduced his imagination, and thus succeed "in planting in his little soul noble and valiant aspirations for the service of God." Such are the admirable counsels in which we behold St. Francis de Sales varying his method according to the nature of the minds he directs, and tracing the truest, the most beautiful line of Christian education.

To second her in this difficult work, for there was question of forming not only the heart, but the mind of Celse-Bénigne, his mother had, whilst at Dijon, her venerable father, who, great and noble in character, possessed a highly cultivated mind. He was well versed in law and polite literature, wrote Latin as correctly as French, and was eloquent in both languages. In fine, he was worthy, by his sublime virtues, to be the father of St. Chantal, and by his brilliant and solid mental gifts the great-grandfather of Madame de Sévigné.

Although of great assistance in the general direction of his grandson's studies, yet he could not attend to them in detail; therefore, by St. Francis de Sales' advice, it was decided to place Celse-Bénigne in the hands of a preceptor.

Madame de Chantal had to search neither long nor far for one. When her brother André went to Paris to pursue those studies which afterwards won for him the doctor's cap in civil law, in canon law, and in theology, he had been accompanied and directed by a most distinguished ecclesiastic, familiarly called "Good M. Robert," on account of his

charming meekness, humility, and simplicity. But he might justly have been styled, "The learned M. Robert," for he was, undoubtedly, one of the most erudite men of the day.

It was he who, at Madame de Chantal's request, undertook the education of Celse-Bénigne and, soon after, of her sister's two orphan children, Bénigne and Jacques de Neufchèzes, toward whom their saintly aunt acted a mother's part. He entered so heartily into his task, and fulfilled it so well and devotedly, that he won the affection, esteem, and deep gratitude of the Baroness. His name, coupled with grateful allusion to his services, is found more than thirty years after in some of the last letters written by her.

It was a great relief to President Frémyot and a source of equal satisfaction for St. Francis de Sales, to think that, in the training of a child whose disposition was so impulsive, so ardent, so impatient of control, Madame de Chantal had such an aid. "I have been thinking of your dear son," wrote St. Francis de Sales to her, "and, knowing his disposition, I think that great care should be taken to form his heart to virtue, or, at least, to guard against its inclining to vice; and for this purpose you must earnestly recommend him to good M. Robert's care, and often afford him an opportunity of appreciating true wisdom by the advice and remonstrances of those that are themselves virtuous." [1] And again: "I bless Our Lord for having given you good M. Robert. It is a grace for your dear child." [2]

Three or four years after, when Madame de Chantal was bidding adieu to the world to enter the cloister, this "good M. Robert" was there, in the midst of her relatives, encouraging her to accomplish her sacrifice, promising to finish her son's education, and swearing that he would never leave him. And if anything could determine Madame de Chantal to leave Celse-Bénigne in Dijon, instead of taking him with his sisters to Annecy, it was the thought that, besides her venerable father, to whose care she had confided him, he would have M. Robert to watch over him. The good priest kept

[1] *Lettres de Saint François de Sales.* Edition Migne, vol. vi. p. 644.

[2] Letter of July 13, 1608.

his promise. He never left the young Baron de Chantal, whom he loved with paternal affection. He directed his studies, and, after they were finished, prepared him to appear at court in a manner becoming his rank. When Celse-Bénigne set out for Paris, M. Robert remained in Dijon with Bénigne and Jacques de Neufchèzes. His old age was spent in the bosom of this noble family, which had become his own; for, when Jacques de Neufchèzes was appointed to the see of Châlon, he chose his venerable preceptor for his Vicar-General. Amidst the labor attendant on the education of President Frémyot's children and grandchildren, he found leisure to give to Christian literature his beautiful *Gallia Christiana*, to which the Benedictines afterward made some additions, without, however, finishing the work.

Madame de Chantal felt the same solicitude for her other children as for Celse-Bénigne. Marie-Aimée, the eldest of the little girls, was the subject of continual correspondence between the two saints. "I pray for all your children," wrote St. Francis de Sales; "for, my daughter, they all seem so near to me that no relationship could strengthen the tie. I look upon them as my own children, and as such keep them in the depths of my heart. But particularly Marie-Aimée, for she is the eldest daughter, and, besides, I am bound to love her most tenderly, because one day in Dijon, when you were not at home, she treated me very affectionately and allowed me to kiss her with the kiss of innocence.[1] Have I not, then, great reason to beg Our Lord to render her very acceptable to Him?"[2] It was decided that Marie-Aimée's vocation was for the world, and there was every indication of her one day playing a distinguished part in it. St. Francis de Sales, therefore, insisted upon the necessity of training her mind, heart, and conscience with great care. "Since our Aimée wishes to remain in the stormy world," he wrote, "a hundred times more care must, of course, be taken to confirm her in true virtue and piety. Her bark must be much better fitted out with all that is necessary to

[1] This was in the year 1604, Marie-Aimée being seven years old.
[2] Letter of January 24, 1608.

secure it against the winds and waves. The true fear of God must be planted deep in her soul, and she must be trained to the holiest practices of piety." [1]

Madame de Chantal followed these instructions so much the more zealously, as Marie-Aimée was then preparing for her First Communion, an action which, although not then attended with the public solemnity now so justly accorded it, was not less the great and decisive action of youth. Our saint would have been pleased if St. Francis de Sales could have prepared Marie-Aimée himself for this important duty, and he, too, was quite as anxious for it as she; but circumstances not permitting his going to Burgundy as he had hoped, he advised Madame de Chantal not to wait for him. "Were I with you," he wrote, March 3, 1608, "I confess it would give me great pleasure to prepare Marie-Aimée for her First Communion; for it is a memorable event for a soul destined for something great, as is hers. But, still, my ambition must not deprive her of this Heavenly Food at Easter. Now, it is my opinion that you ought to prepare her, and may God take her for His beloved and grant her a feeling sense of His love for it." [2]

Some time after, with that pleasantry of which we too often fancy the saints destitute, St. Francis de Sales, who had not seen Marie-Aimée since she was very little, wrote playfully to her mother: "It is true that I inquired of Jean whether our dear Marie-Aimée wears the *mould;* but I meant no harm by it. For you surely know that I like well-moulded heads, and if that little head is moulded on yours, I shall cherish it all the more. It cannot be helped, girls must be a little fine." [3]

When thinking of the future of her children, Madame de Chantal would sometimes say to herself that she would be very happy if one of them would consecrate herself to God, and her choice involuntarily fell upon Françoise or Charlotte—Françoise, because of her wild and impulsive nature, which made her mother fear shipwreck in the world; and Charlotte, because of her innocence and angelic disposition.

[1] Letter of August 6, 1606.
[2] Letter of March 3, 1608.
[3] Letter of June 25, 1608.

She sometimes spoke of it to her holy director, whose invariable answer on the delicate subject is stamped with the highest wisdom. "If Françoise wishes of her own accord to be a religious," he wrote, "well and good;—otherwise I do not approve of anticipating her will by plans, but only, as in other cases, by sweet suggestions."[1] The following year he again wrote: "I approve of your placing your little girls (Françoise and Charlotte) in convents with the intention of leaving them there, but only on two conditions: first, that the convents be good and reformed; secondly, that, when it is time for them to make their vows, which cannot be before they are sixteen years old, it be diligently ascertained whether they wish to do so freely and devoutly. For, if they do not love that state of life, it would be a great sacrilege to force them to embrace it. Make your arrangements, then, to this effect, calmly and carefully. I very much approve the step."[2]

There was, at that time, at Puy-d'Orbe, in Burgundy, a few leagues from Bourbilly and Monthelon, a Benedictine Abbey recently reformed by St. Francis de Sales. It was governed by one of Madame de Chantal's most intimate friends, Madame Rose Bourgeois, a sister of Madame Brulard. It was to this Abbey that our saint decided upon sending Françoise and Charlotte, convinced that they would nowhere be reared with more maternal affection, and that in none other could they better test their vocation. But the project failed; and so, happily for them, Françoise and Charlotte never left their mother.

St. Francis de Sales had a sister about thirteen years old whom he loved devotedly, "having baptized her himself, having exercised upon her for the first time that function of his priesthood." As he wished "to make something good of her," he had confided her to Madame de Chantal on her last journey to Savoy, that she might take her to Puy-d'Orbe, where he wished her to be educated, and where, it had been agreed, Françoise and Charlotte de Chantal would soon join her. Jeanne de Sales remained some time at Puy-d'Orbe. Though amiable and pious, she evinced no inclina-

[1] Letter of October 14, 1604. [2] Letter of August 6, 1606.

tion to become a religious. As soon as St. Francis de Sales learned this, he resolved that Jeanne should not remain there against her will. He formed a new project, which was to confide her to Madame de Chantal, that she might be educated with her three daughters. The letters that he wrote on this occasion are the most courteous that can be imagined. "I do not pause to deliberate whether or not I ought to give you my little sister," he wrote, "for, independently of my own inclination, my mother wishes it so much that she wishes it anxiously, ever since she became aware that her daughter had no desire to be a religious; so that, even if I did not already wish it, I should be obliged to wish it. For this purpose, I have sent you thirty crowns by way of Lyons, as well to defray the necessary expense of sending for her, as to make some little return to the maids who wait upon the abbess, for she cannot have been there so long without giving them a great deal of trouble. Now, how that ought to be done, I do not know; so I beg you, my dear child, to take charge of it, and order about it whatever is proper. I am a little afraid that your friend, the abbess, will be vexed at the withdrawal of my sister; but there is no remedy for it. It would be unreasonable to keep a girl so long in a convent when she does not wish to pass her life there." After these preliminaries, he adds, half jokingly: "And as to you, ought I not to use some little ceremony in placing this burden on your shoulders? But that, I assure you, would not be in my power; but it is in my power to beg you, yes, to conjure you (and, if I dared, I should add something stronger) to inform me of whatever will be requisite to fit her out and keep her to your fancy, as the Spanish princesses do when maids of honor are given them. This is my positive wish; even so far as to have her wear a cowl, if that is part of your livery. You see, my dear child, I am not in one of my bad humors, but I am in good earnest. You must (I wish it, and, if the subject allowed, I would command you) let me know what she will need. I say for her outfit, since board is not to be mentioned, else you would make me a thousand reproaches, I know. I am writing to your respected father-in-law, to beg his approval of the favor you are about to confer upon me; but

the truth is, I know nothing of fine words—you will supply for me, if you please." [1]

This letter was received with universal joy by the little circle at Monthelon, for Jeanne de Sales was no stranger there. On her way to Puy-d'Orbe she had made a short visit to the castle and completely won the affection of the children. She was then immediately sent for, and received as a sister. Madame de Chantal renounced her project of parting with Françoise and Charlotte, and at once resumed more zealously than ever the great work of educating her daughters.

Though history had left us no information upon the matter, it would still be easy to form an idea of the style of education given by such a mother. Apart from her sanctity, she was a very earnest and practical woman. Her aim was to make her daughters useful women, fully conscious of the noble and sacred mission apportioned them in this world, active and generous Christians, capable of bearing worthily the burden of their vocation. She would have blushed at limiting her efforts to making of them amiable worldlings and witty conversationalists. Not that she undervalued those exterior graces which add so many charms to virtue, especially in a woman; for, at the same time that she had provided a very distinguished ecclesiastic as preceptor to her son, she had summoned to the castle of Monthelon a young lady, full of piety, sense, and talents, that her daughters' education might be as brilliant as their position exacted. But the more important part of the work, the forming of their hearts, she reserved for herself exclusively. In her eyes, talents and graceful manners were not only valueless, but even dangerous if, at the same time, the spirit of devotedness and sacrifice was not developed in the soul, for in this essentially consists the education of the heart.

It is the heart that governs the human frame, and this heart, which regulates the whole being, has only two movements. It dilates or it contracts. It gives itself entirely to others or it sacrifices all others to self. Self-sacrifice or egoism—there is no mean; and accordingly as it chooses

[1] Letter of June 8, 1606.

one or the other of these roads, it draws the whole soul after it. Who, then, does not feel the great importance of the education of the heart? Madame de Chantal pondered it unceasingly. To root out from the soul of her daughters every fibre of selfishness, to stifle the taste for luxury and pleasure which dries up the soul and renders it incapable of making a sacrifice, to accustom them, instead, to the joy springing from charity and self-denial, and, as God alone is the source of this spirit of devotedness, to unite them closely to Him by the practice of true and solid piety,—this was what wholly occupied the mind of Madame de Chantal. One of the most beautiful pictures of her life is that in which we behold her making use of means to succeed in a work bristling with difficulties.

Every morning, after she had made her meditation, about six o'clock in winter, a little earlier in summer, she entered her children's sleeping apartment, awoke them, and dressed them herself. When all were ready, she placed them in a circle around her, and taught them their prayers, using, for this purpose, the "Morning Exercise" sent her by the holy Bishop of Geneva. After their prayers, she made them reflect a few moments on some religious truths. We have already seen how clearly and faithfully Marie-Aimée used to render an account of her short meditation.

This first duty over, they all kissed one another, and went to bid their grandfather good-morning. Their mother went with them, to give them an example of the filial respect due to aged relatives.

About eight o'clock, Mass was said in the chapel of the castle. The whole household, even the little children, assisted at it. Our saint, who thought that day a blank on which she had not been present at the Adorable Sacrifice, spared no pains to teach them to assist at it devoutly.

During the day, she taught them the catechism, and spoke to them of God with that unction which flows so naturally from the hearts of the saints. The housekeeper's five children, the servants of the castle, and the poor children of the parish, attended these instructions. It was a most touching sight to see this elegant lady, who had been the ornament of society, who had been surnamed "The perfect lady,"

transformed into an humble school-mistress, teaching little children to read and to pray. "Oh! certainly," wrote St. Francis de Sales, full of admiration at such a life, "I very much approve of your being a school-mistress. God will be pleased with you for it, for He loves little children; and, as I said the other day at catechism, to encourage our ladies to take care of their daughters, the angels of little children love with special love those that train them in the fear of God and instil pious sentiments into their tender soul."[1] Madame de Chantal taught them to raise their heart to God from time to time, particularly when the clock struck, and made them recite their grace aloud both before and after meals. It was thus that she formed in their young soul the habit of prayer, which so ennobles and strengthens the faithful Christian.

After supper she retired early with her children, made them say their prayers, to which a *De profundis* for their deceased father was always added. Then followed the examination of conscience, the blessing of the angel-guardian was asked, and all said aloud the *In manus tuas.*[2] Then Madame de Chantal gave them holy water and her blessing, and made them lie down modestly, each in a separate little bed, in accordance with St. Francis de Sales' advice. It was not long before they sank into peaceful sleep, under the protection of God and the guardianship of their good mother, who remained long by them, and withdrew only when she saw them asleep. Next to these habits of prayer, Madame de Chantal endeavored to implant in her children the love of labor, more necessary at that period than ever. The world was beginning to be peopled with a multitude of women most amiable, most intelligent, it is true, who conversed wonderfully well, who wrote with enchanting grace, but whose frivolous and idle life deserves not the esteem accorded them to-day. Old customs were passing away. Rarely was there met in the castles of the nobility or the splendid mansions of the gentry one of those industrious and prudent women who, like the *strong woman* of Holy

[1] Letter of February 11, 1607.

[2] "*Into Thy hands I commend my spirit.*"—Ps. xxx. 6.

Writ, plied her needle, spun her wool, and with her own hands fashioned her children's and her husband's clothes.

By the stern principles of her early education, and still more by her virtue, Madame de Chantal was one of the strong women of the olden time. "Never was she seen idle," say her biographers. "When visitors came, she received them with work in hand," and "whatever company there might be at the castle, she always had her work brought to her after the table was cleared." A maid having begged her one day to rest a little, she replied: "Oh, no! If I wasted my time, I should consider it something stolen from the Church and the poor, for whom I am working." She formed her children upon this model. As soon as they could hold a needle, she taught them to hem linens for the sacred vessels, embroider altar-cloths, and sew for the poor. She impressed upon them never to remain idle. She took particular pleasure in working for monasteries that undergo the rigors of holy poverty, and for religious engaged in the labors of the apostolate. It may readily be supposed that St. Francis de Sales was not forgotten in the industrious little circle. Once they sent him a very beautifully embroidered corporal. "Do you know," responded the amiable saint, "what I say whilst spreading your corporal for the Consecration? Well, I say: 'May the heart of her who sent me this be dilated under the sacred influence of the will of the Saviour!'" Another time, they sent him several yards of serge, spun by Madame de Chantal, to make a cassock. "Really," he wrote in return, "I laughed heartily at your plan to make me wear your serge and give its value to the poor. But, who will inform me of its just value! for, should I give to the poor its worth as I estimate it, I should not have the means to do so, I assure you. . . . Now, then, let it be so for this time, for you must know that I do not have new clothes every year, but only when I need them."

By thus accustoming her daughters to a life ever active and occupied, Madame de Chantal counteracted some of the dangers they were afterward to meet in the world; and by rearing them with simple tastes, without ornaments and grand toilettes, she protected them from vain thoughts and

desires to please, which at the age of fifteen begin to weaken piety and desiccate the heart. This was one of the points upon which St. Francis de Sales most insisted. "Remove vanity from their soul," he wrote. "It is almost born with their sex." Madame de Chantal applied the more readily to follow this counsel as her children, remarkable for their increasing beauty, were very much inclined to vanity, Celse-Bénigne as much as Marie-Aimée, Françoise still more than either. Their mother never tired praising simplicity and modesty. She taught them to be earnest, to esteem others for their qualities, not for their dress, and to laugh at those absurd and constantly changing fashions that entail such expense and cause so much sin. One day, she noticed in little Marie-Aimée, who was growing tall, an emotion of vanity and complacency when she put on her a beautiful dress. She took the child to walk with her under the great old trees of the avenue of Bourbilly, and there spoke to her seriously of the folly of taking vanity in clothes. She told her that we ought rather to blush, since they are the proof of our lost innocence; that we should recall the stable and the manger in which Jesus Christ was born, the cross upon which He died, and, like the saints, grieve at the necessity of wearing silken robes and golden crowns, since Our Saviour wore a crown of thorns. She added, in conclusion, that if St. Bernard, whose relative Marie-Aimée had the honor to be, would not recognize his sister when she appeared before him too finely dressed, she need not hope to be acknowledged as her daughter if she did not renounce vanity. This energetic lesson made a lasting impression upon the child.[1]

But it was not enough to preserve her children from the dangers of vanity; Madame de Chantal aimed at developing charity in their soul, without which woman is incapable of her mission. Very far from sparing them heart-rending spectacles of misery, of affliction, and even of the death-agony, she took them with her in her visits to the poor. Celse-Bénigne carried the bread, Marie-Aimée the remedies, and Françoise some money. This was their reward when

[1] Deposition of Sister Marie-Louise de Bussière.—See also *Les premières Mères de la Visitation*, vol. ii. p. 70.

they had been obedient and industrious. One of their greatest punishments was to be left at home when their mother made her daily round to the huts of the poor. By this beautiful habit of close intercourse with the unfortunate, contracted in early childhood, Madame de Chantal cultivated her children's hearts; she opened in them those fountains of sympathy that seem almost unknown at present, because children are reared in vanity, which dries up the feelings, instead of in charity, which vivifies and strengthens.

That the remedy might always be at hand, if, in spite of maternal vigilance, evil should glide into their soul, she taught them to love truth, to have an open heart and lips sincere. There was scarcely any fault of which the avowal did not obtain forgiveness. But a want of sincerity or an act of dissimulation she never pardoned. One day, one of the little girls, still a mere baby, feigned indisposition in order to escape some little duty. The vigilant mother, perceiving it, took the child aside, and made her acknowledge the truth. It was only a childish caprice; nevertheless, Madame de Chantal, who knew that children who have not a great fear of sin will never possess great virtues, severely corrected her. From that day, even the shadow of dissimulation was never remarked in the child.[1] Such an education, tender yet firm, full of sublime maxims and energetic discipline, could not fail. The children of Madame de Chantal were, in fact, the admiration of all who knew them. Not only at Autun and Dijon, but even in Savoy, "they were found so amiable, well-reared, and modest, that people crowded to the churches and houses to see them."[2]

Marie-Aimée was the living image of her mother. "Although at that time only in her fifteenth year, her prudence far surpassed her age. It was hard to decide which to admire more, her beauty or her modesty. Her deportment was so frank and dignified, her address so gracious and affable, that every one revered her as an angel and felt confidence in her advice."[3] Similar things are recorded of

[1] *Les premières Mères de la Visitation—Marie-Aimée de Chantal*, vol. ii. p. 58.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, part i. chap. xxiii.

[3] *Notice sur Marie-Aimée*, by Mother de Chaugy.

Françoise, whom, however, the practice of virtue cost more. She was less resolute, less steady in the service of God; but, despite the petulant ardor of her disposition, she visibly advanced in the earnest practice of virtue. These children were not, however, without their faults. Who is perfect at sixteen? But a word sufficed to check them, a look to recall them to duty. A charming little incident illustrates their docility. One day, as Françoise, "magnificently attired, with a profusion of ribbons and curls," was going out, she happened to meet at the door St. Francis de Sales, who had come to visit her mother. She stopped, confused and blushing, at the thought of her finery, so little in accordance with his instructions. The holy Bishop also paused, and looked at her without saying a word, that shame might make her conscious of her fault; then, with a smile, he said to her kindly: "I am not so displeased as you might suppose. This finery savors somewhat of the world, it is true; but that blush comes apparently from Heaven and from a conscience not bereft of the grace of Jesus Christ." And, pushing some of her curls under her hood, he pleasantly added: "You will hide the rest, I am sure, without my assistance. I must not deprive you of that merit, and you will find that you will be more pleasing to God than you would have been to the world." This unexpected encounter, the saint's gentleness, and divine grace made a deep impression on Françoise.[1] Marie-Aimée, also, suffered from attacks of vanity, although, perhaps, less than her sister. "She had exquisite taste, and too much of her time was employed in arranging her dress and adorning herself." Madame de Chantal sweetly, but firmly, reproved her. The obedient child acknowledged her fault, and went to declare it to St. Francis de Sales. From that time she was noted only for the neatness and modesty of her attire.[2]

But both these girls, so beautiful, so calculated to please the world, were seldom seen in its assemblies. They were

[1] *Oraison funèbre de Madame de Toulongeon.*

[2] *Notice sur la Baronne de Sales de Thorens.* See also *Marie Aimée de Chantal*, by Mother de Chaugy.

more frequently found in the cabins of the poor than in the homes of the rich; but when they did appear in society, their gracious and affable demeanor and their delicate attention to others, forgetful of self, bespoke them at once the daughters of a saint. In their own home, "they received strangers so courteously, respectfully, and modestly, that their house was the resort of all the nobility of the province." [1] But let us not anticipate. We shall see later Marie-Aimée and Françoise married and settled in the world, objects of still greater solicitude to their saintly mother, but responding thereto by virtue so eminent as to provoke the admiration of St. Francis de Sales himself.

Whilst Madame de Chantal was thus proving herself a true mother, she remained the most faithful and loving of widows. Her thoughts were ever on her husband, now dead several years. She spoke of him constantly and always with sighs, for which she reproached herself as for a weakness, and soon she experienced a strange and touching scruple upon this point. She feared she was offending God by mourning so long and bitterly him whom He had taken from her; and toward the year 1606 she consulted for the first time her holy director on the subject.

Up to that time, that is, in 1604 and 1605, her letters are full of the deepest, tenderest remembrance of her husband, but without any trace of anxiety or scruple. She importuned St. Francis de Sales to pray for the Baron de Chantal. "Be assured," wrote the holy Bishop to her, October 14, 1604, "that I do not forget your deceased husband at Holy Mass." A month later, November 9th, he wrote: "I have already told you, and I repeat it, since you are so urgent about it, that every day I bear to the holy altar the remembrance of your dear husband." The following year, on the 30th of November, 1605: "Not a day passes upon which I do not pray for your husband's soul, and I think you wished to remind me of him by those two incidents you have related to me about him, and which pleased me very much." [2] It

[1] *Notice sur la Baronne de Sales de Thorens.*

[2] Letters of St. Francis de Sales, published and unpublished, of said dates.

was not till July, 1606, that Madame de Chantal manifests uneasiness lest this vivid and constant remembrance of her husband, the habit she had of constantly talking about him, the tears and sighs that she could not repress, might be opposed to the full and entire resignation she wished to show to the holy will of God. "You ask me," says St. Francis de Sales, "whether you have not been speaking too frequently of your deceased husband. What shall I answer, my dear child? For I did not notice it. But now, having reflected, I tell you that there is no danger in speaking of him when opportunity presents itself, for that testifies the remembrance which is his due; but I think it would be better when speaking of him to do so without words and sighs that indicate a love attached and clinging to his corporal presence. Therefore, instead of saying, 'My poor deceased husband,' I would say: 'My husband, may God be merciful to him!' and use these words with an affection not weakened by time, but freed and purified by a higher love. I think you rightly understand me, for you always understand me well." [1]

Not only had Madame de Chantal never ceased speaking of her husband, but in 1606, after a lapse of five years, she could not yet bear to hear the name of him who had been the cause of his death. As M. d'Anlezy was a relative of Baron de Chantal, several efforts had been made to bring about an interview between him and the bereaved widow. But, although our saint had pardoned him, the idea of seeing in the midst of her children the man who had made them orphans was so revolting to her that she had prohibited his being mentioned in her presence. A little later, St. Francis de Sales had ventured to say a word to her about him; but, seeing that he was not listened to, he followed his usual prudent and gentle method of not anticipating grace. He did not insist upon the point, but awaited a more favorable opportunity. Toward the close of June, 1605, our saint herself unexpectedly furnished him with a better one than he had dared to hope for. In one of her letters to him, her pen turned upon her husband, as it often did, and she told

[1] Letter of July 7, 1606.

him how her loved husband had died, calmly and sweetly, with words of pardon upon his lips for all who had offended him. St. Francis de Sales was too skilful not to profit by such an opportunity to renew his attempt. He at once replied: "I was consoled at your account of the marks of virtue that appeared in the soul of your deceased husband at the moment of departure from this world. They were evident signs of his good dispositions and of the presence of God's grace. Hence, you see very well that, if he could speak to you, he would say what I have told you about an interview with him who caused his death. Now, come, my dear child, have courage! It is to you, and consequently to me, a great consolation to know that this chevalier was kind and gracious to those that had wounded or offended him. Ah! then, he will be very happy to see us acting in the same manner." And as a last argument, alluding to her Heavenly Spouse, after speaking of her earthly one, thus applying to his purpose the two great loves that filled her heart, he says: "But what shall I say of our new Spouse? What meekness He practised toward those that put Him to death, and that not by accident, but through malice! Ah! how pleasing it will be to Him if we do the same! He is our new Spouse, my dear child, for death not only does not dissolve our marriage with Him, but it perfects and consummates it." It might be thought that St. Francis de Sales surely triumphed this time. Not so. In 1605, no more than in 1604, could Madame de Chantal bring herself to make the sacrifice demanded of her.

Another year passed, and in July, 1606, the relatives of Madame de Chantal and M. d'Anlezy made a new effort. Our saint heard of the design, and her whole soul revolted. She wrote at once to St. Francis de Sales, expressing to him her fears, and confiding to him her repugnance. The saint replied: "It is not necessary that you seek either the day or the opportunity (to see M. d'Anlezy); but if he presents himself, I wish you to receive him kindly, graciously, and compassionately. I know that this meeting will be very exciting, that your blood will boil; but what of that? So was our dear Lord affected at the sight of His dead Lazarus and at the anticipation of His Passion. Yes: but what says

Holy Scripture? That, on both occasions, He raised His eyes to heaven. That is it, my child; God makes us see by these emotions how much of flesh and bone we are, how little of spirit." [1]

Feeling the necessity of insisting upon the point, since this state of soul could not last longer without prejudicing the perfection after which Madame de Chantal was laboring, and because she was strong enough now to make the great sacrifice, he added: "Have I been sufficiently explicit? I repeat, I do not mean that you should seek a meeting with M. d'Anlezy, but I wish you to be condescending toward those that desire to procure it, and to testify that you love everything, yes, even your husband's death, for the love of your sweet Saviour." And, feeling the need of supporting after having commanded, something that he did so rarely, he writes: "Courage, my child, let us practise these rough and humiliating, but solid, holy, and excellent virtues. Adieu, my child, be quiet, stand on tiptoe, and you will reach to heaven." [2]

This time Madame de Chantal obeyed. She consented to an interview with M. d'Anlezy. She was as courteous to him as she could possibly be, and, wishing to overcome even the most legitimate repugnance of nature, she offered to be godmother to his new-born child. But this heroic act was the result of a bitter struggle. St. Francis de Sales was again obliged to intervene, and partly by persuasion, partly by authority, wrest this favor from her crushed and resisting heart.[3]

This is a true picture of Madame de Chantal. Here we see the inconsolable wife, even after six years of widowhood, and, notwithstanding her entire detachment from all things, daily weeping over the husband she had so loved. In vain does she consecrate herself to God with all the impetuosity of her nature; in vain does she lavish upon the poor the treasures of her affectionate disposition; nothing can veil in her soul the ever-present image of her departed husband. Her love for him is so tender, so deep, so constant, that her

[1] Letter of July 6, 1606.
[2] Letter of July 2, 1606.
[3] Letter of January 24, 1608.

obedience seems to pale before it; and, for the first time, she appears to be upon the point of turning a deaf ear to the voice of St. Francis de Sales. Far from destroying the affections of the wife and the mother, the love of God vivifies them, thus revealing the ineffable mystery, that detachment is not insensibility, and that the hearts of true wives, mothers, and daughters are the hearts of saints!

It was, however, easier for Madame de Chantal to forget the world than to be forgotten by it. She was still young. She possessed a distinguished name, large fortune, admirable qualities of mind and heart, great exterior attractions, and that indescribable charm which virtue adds to beauty. Scarcely a year passed in which she did not receive proposals of marriage. In 1606, above all, it was a strongly mooted question. From the very first, Madame de Chantal replied firmly that the affair was not even to be thought of, that it was simply impossible. St. Francis de Sales wrote to congratulate her upon the answer she had given: "Well said, my child! On such occasions one should be brief and not mince the matter. We should not amuse customers when we have not the goods they want. We should tell them so promptly, that they may seek elsewhere. Really, these people are very bold. Do they not see that we have taken down our flag?" [1]

It appears that, to win her consent, family reasons were alleged, particularly the interest of her aged father, who would derive more advantage than she herself from this marriage, for St. Francis de Sales continues: "Oh, my child, you must be very straightforward in this respect and not hear of capitulation. Let them alone. God will certainly take care of the father without sacrificing the daughter. Indeed, that is not badly said," he added, alluding to something in Madame de Chantal's letter: "Sts. Thecla, Agatha and Agnes suffered death rather than lose the lily of chastity and they want to frighten you with phantoms. Certainly, my child, read, read attentively the *Imitation of the Blessed Virgin* and *St. Jerome's Epistles.* In the latter you will find what he wrote to his *Furia*, [2] as well as other things that

[1] Letter of January 30, 1606.

[2] The Epistle in which St. Jerome admirably treats of the happiness and perfection of widows.

are very beautiful." Two weeks later, the Baroness went to Dijon to see President Frémyot and put an end to this matter. There she had to undergo the most painful assaults, but nothing could shake her resolution.

A little later, they began to urge her anew. The gentleman who solicited her hand was immensely rich, and a widower. He had several children, and marriages were proposed between them and the children of Madame de Chantal, which would have placed her family in a state of great opulence.[1] All our saint's relatives leagued against her, and determined to gain her consent by assault. President Frémyot, who was much attached to his proposed son-in-law, employed by turns entreaties, tears, and commands, which tortured his holy daughter. "I would have been delighted to be at my father-in-law's," she used to say. "All the persecution I suffered there seemed roses compared with these thorns. I clung to the tree of the holy Cross, lest so many siren voices would lull my heart into some worldly complaisance."

One day, in particular, the attack was so persevering and painful, that it seemed to the holy widow that she was about to succumb. She made her escape from her relatives, ran to her chamber, and falling on her knees, prayed long and with torrents of tears. At last she arose, determined to execute a design she had long been contemplating. Taking a bodkin, she heated it red-hot, bared her breast, and traced in deep lines the name of *Jesus* just over her heart, as a sign that she absolutely renounced every alliance but that with Jesus Christ. The iron entered so deep that she knew not how to staunch the blood that flowed copiously from this heroic wound. Then dipping a pen into her blood, she wrote anew her vows and the promise to consecrate herself entirely to the pure love of God.

When, thirty years after, the venerable Mother de Chantal died and her religious commenced to wash her body, they found on her flesh, wasted by penance, just over the heart,

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 92. But Mother de Chaugy errs in placing this fact in 1609, for the letters of St. Francis de Sales fix it in 1606.

"this holy name, graven in large characters about an inch in length, well-formed, excepting the letter S, which was unfinished. The cross was below it." [1]

The sisters contemplated with emotion that sacred sign of courage and chastity, and they understood the admirable words of the *Following of Christ*, "Without suffering there is no love." [2]

[1] *Circulaire* of Mother de Musy on the death of Mother de Chantal.

[2] It is almost useless to remark that this action is one of those of which we are accustomed to say that they are to be admired, but not imitated. Such was St. Francis de Sales' opinion, who even declared that, had he been consulted by Madame de Chantal, he would not have permitted it. Mother de Ballon, in her *Mémoires*, says: "On the 25th of November, 1621, whilst conversing with His Lordship, the Bishop of Geneva, I told him, among other things, that I had heard that Mother de Chantal, when she was a widow and still a secular, had asked her confessor's permission to engrave upon her person over the heart with a heated graver, the two words: *Live Jesus!* and that he had granted it; but that the pious operation had excited fever. I had then some desire to do the same, though, perhaps, it was only a movement of vanity. Nevertheless, I spoke of it to the holy prelate. He told me it was true that Madame de Chantal had done that by the advice of her confessor, that is to say, with his permission, but that she was not then under his direction, and that he would not have permitted it. So he absolutely refused to allow me to do it." (Manuscript *Mémoire*, archives of Annecy.) This account is very interesting, although it contains some inaccuracies. It was not *Live Jesus!* but only *Jesus* that St. Chantal engraved upon her breast. As to the words attributed to St. Francis de Sales, "that she was not then under his direction," they only mean that he was at that time distant from her, and that she could not consult him; for this incident of her life certainly took place in the year 1606, or perhaps in the first weeks of 1607. There is no doubt upon the point.

CHAPTER X.

GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN FRANCE IN 1607.—MADAME DE CHANTAL BECOMES SENSIBLE OF HER CALL TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.—ADMIRABLE PRUDENCE OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, WHO, AT LAST, REVEALS TO HER THE SECRET OF HER VOCATION.

1607.

Whilst Madame de Chantal was engraving upon her heart the name of *Jesus* as a sign of her absolute consecration to God, she began to feel a greater inclination to leave all, to give up the world and her family, and to withdraw into solitude. Her desire for the religious life, still vague in 1605, more decided in 1606, suddenly became, in 1607, very intense and eager. She who was soon to soar like an eagle to the heights of the contemplative life, now began to flap her wings impatiently.

When God wishes to save an age, when His Church has need of being glorified and avenged, He sends a divine breath, and the face of the earth is renewed. This divine breath was then passing over the world. It had arisen in Italy, and there suddenly appeared in that country, like so many prodigies, St. Pius V., St. Charles Borromeo, St. Philip Neri, and a host of others. It had passed over Spain, and St. Ignatius, St. Teresa, St. Peter of Alcantara, and St. John of the Cross were born. It was beginning to be felt in France, and the hour had at last come in which, after long hesitation, she, too, was about to take part in the great Catholic renovation.

Too long seduced by the charms of novelty, and prepared, moreover, by depraved morals to accept depraved doctrines; fallen from the frivolity of Francis I. to the intrigues of Catherine de Medicis, and from the weakness of Charles IX.

to the scandalous devotion of Henry III., France had been on the point of lapsing into Protestantism. Fortunately, she awoke, terrified at the sight of the abyss yawning before her, and prepared to carry into the struggle between good and evil her characteristic ardor and impetuosity. By the lurid glimmer of the storm, the greatness of the danger and the causes that led to it were, at last, perceived: religious ignorance, corrupt morals, institutions in ruins, scandal dishonoring the altar and infecting the cloister, indolent Bishops opening the doors of the sanctuary to priests without vocation, and holy things despised by the people, because profaned by unworthy ministers. These wounds, whose depth could no longer be dissembled, drew sighs from some and excited holy zeal in the hearts of others. Councils and meetings of the clergy were everywhere assembling to concert remedies. To the preachers of the League, whose enthusiastic and eagerly attended discourses were heated by earthly passions, succeeded others not less ardent and popular. But the words of the latter fell from the lips of saints and were addressed only to the conscience. St. Francis Regis in the Cévennes, Père Eudes in Normandy, Michel le Noblez in Brittany, Blessed Peter Fourrier in Lorraine, and the illustrious Cardinal Duperron in Paris patiently wrestled, step by step, here with heresy, there with ignorance, and everywhere with depravity.

And, as every species of reformation is ephemeral if it does not commence with childhood, César de Bus founded for the education of poor children the Congregation of the Fathers of the Christian Doctrine, the first draught of a work which the Venerable de la Salle was destined to perfect. The Jesuits, recalled from exile only four years previously, were reopening their colleges for the purpose of withdrawing from Protestantism those who had first fallen under its influence. Intermediate to both these educational plans, which embraced the poor and the rich, and as a complement to both the one and the other, the young and saintly Cardinal de Bérulle was preparing to establish the colleges of the Oratory, in which, however, he did not succeed until five years later.

The same zeal, intelligence, and activity were displayed in

the institution of congregations and schools for the education of girls, though the plans were not yet matured. But everything was in preparation, everything was about to germinate in the mind and the heart of the saints. France was peopled by an immense number of virgins who, struck by the necessity of forming Christian women, were renouncing the sweet honor of motherhood to consecrate themselves to that supreme work. The Ursulines, the Sisters of Notre-Dame of Lorraine, those of Notre-Dame of Bordeaux, and others were opening schools and, by thus renewing youth, were preparing the way for the seventeenth century, which was almost as great in its women as in its men, and which, moreover, was great only because it was profoundly Christian.

But what would have been the final result of those missions and schools, of that vast renovation of souls and of works, had not the priesthood renewed its vigor? The holiest Bishops had pondered this thought with groans, and, although their efforts had so far been crowned with little success, they were now beginning to see on the horizon prognostics of a better future. He who was, in this case, as in every other, to prove himself so skilful and successful, Vincent de Paul, was at that time but a very young priest. He had just sold himself to redeem a captive, and was making in the galleys of Tunis the first trial of his heart, of that heart strong and tender, which was to become as immense as misery and as bold as love, and whence during sixty years were to spring without interruption inspirations of charity so beautiful. His disciple in the work of the reformation of the clergy, M. Olier, was not yet born; but Père de Condren had already undertaken the mission. Possessed of heavenly knowledge, born, as St. Chantal said later, to instruct angels as St. Francis de Sales was to instruct men, Père de Condren lived surrounded by a crowd of priests, whom he inspired with his own sublime ideas upon the priesthood, whose hearts he renovated and transformed, and whom he afterward sent forth burning with zeal to the conquest of souls.

At the same time the monastic state was rising from its ruins. The old Order of Citeaux had already seen the re-

form of the Feuillants, of Septfonds, and of Orval, preludes of one still more striking, that of La Trappe. The old Benedictine abbeys, determined to revive the pure spirit of St. Benedict, were reuniting as a Congregation under the name of Saint-Hidulphe and Saint-Vannes, to be known later by the more celebrated title of the Congregation of Saint-Maur. The Capuchins, a new branch of the ever-verdant tree planted by St. Francis, were coming from Italy, the Brothers of St. John of God from Portugal, and the Carmelites from Spain. The birth of new Orders, and the revival of old ones were going on everywhere. From the exhaustless bosom of the Church, from her heart ever young, sprang a thousand inspirations of piety, charity, and sacrifice; and in order to realize them in public institutions, God was forming in silence a crowd of holy souls, whose simultaneous appearance was about to give to the Catholic renovation of France its fecund and marvellous glory.

Madame de Chantal was one of these chosen souls, and her mission was not the least beautiful. But in 1607, at the age of thirty-five, retained in the world by the education of four little children, she seemed destined to be but a model for mothers. She was, however, already beginning to feel the first faint whispering of that celestial breeze which was to bear her from the old ancestral castle to the post assigned her by Divine Providence. Never, perhaps, was St. Francis de Sales more admirable than in his direction of Madame de Chantal at this important moment. The ardor of the one, restrained by the prudence and wise tardiness of the other, form one of the most attractive and instructive pictures to be met in history. We shall now give it attentive study.

Although since her husband's death Madame de Chantal had been daily lessening her intercourse with the world, and in 1603 had taken the significant step of being publicly affiliated to the Order of the Capuchins, yet it does not appear that the thought of the religious life had up to that period crossed her mind. It was not until 1605 that we discover in her for the first time the idea of giving up all for God and retiring into solitude; but where, she knew not, nor does it appear that the thought engrossed her attention. It seems to have been, at the time, nothing more than one of those

fervent aspirations after entire despoilment not rare in souls wholly devoted to God. Nor did St. Francis de Sales seem to attach to it any importance. In a few hasty words he gave Madame de Chantal to understand that she was not to amuse herself with such thoughts, "there being nothing which so prevents our perfecting ourselves in one vocation as aspiring to another." With childlike docility, our saint resolved at once to think no more about the matter. Vain resolution! In spite of herself, her desire for the religious life daily increased. Six months after her first overture, she determined to make another; but with no better success. "I will say nothing to you," replied St. Francis de Sales, "neither of the great abandonment of all things and even of self for God's sake, nor of leaving your country and your father's house. I do not wish to speak upon the subject. May God deign to enlighten you and make known to you His good pleasure!" And without entering into further details, the holy Bishop passed to something else.[1] Madame de Chantal, becoming impatient, returned more eagerly to the charge. She wanted a more explicit answer, and she urged St. Francis de Sales to give it. She even complained of his indifference, nay, almost of his negligence, in so grave a matter. The saint's reply was, as usual, short, prudent, and judicious. He had not been negligent in the examination of her vocation; he thought of it as often as she herself did, even oftener, "if she will allow him to boast a little. But in such things should there not be diligence, careful, it is true, but sweet, patient, and resigned?"[2] Madame de Chantal was quieted for the time, or at least she tried to be, and she renewed her resolution to think no more on the subject. But a month had not passed before she recommenced her solicitations. Nothing could, however, induce St. Francis de Sales to speak before he had long and maturely weighed his words. "Have patience," he wrote, "we shall talk about it next year, if it be God's will that we live so long. That will be time enough; and, besides, I did not wish to reply to that desire of leaving home or of entering into a novitiate of females aspiring to the religious life.

[1] Letter of October 3, 1605.

[2] Letter of May 9, 1606.

All this, my dear child, is too important to be discussed on paper; there is time enough." [1] And, indeed, there was time enough, since there was question of taking a mother from her children; besides, neither St. Francis de Sales nor St. Chantal yet knew the great designs of God over them.

Whilst things were in this state, and even during the course of the same year, Madame de Chantal unexpectedly witnessed in Burgundy so striking a spectacle of virtue and religious perfection, that she was near being led astray by it, so great is the need of direction for even the holiest souls, and so difficult it is for even the most intelligent mind to discern its own way and recognize to what God has called it! A year had scarcely passed since France had welcomed the arrival of Spanish Carmelite nuns, brought to Paris by Cardinal de Bérulle and the illustrious Madame Acarie, since the venerable Mother Anne of Jesus, the first companion and chief confidante of St. Teresa, came to Dijon to found the third French Carmelite convent. This Mother Anne of Jesus was in herself alone a marvel. It has been said of her, and this is eulogium enough, that she was not inferior to St. Teresa in supernatural gifts, and that she surpassed her in natural qualities.[2] She was distinguished for her ecstasies, particularly for the one she had on the day of her profession whilst pronouncing her vows. It was owing to this incident that St. Teresa, actuated by divine modesty, ordained that the Carmelites henceforth should not make their vows in public, a custom since inviolably observed. The Spanish nuns, Mother Isabelle des Anges, Mother Beatrice de la Conception, and a French nun, Mother Marie de la Trinité, all three of high birth and still higher virtue, accompanied Mother Anne of Jesus, and, as if everything should concur to render the reception more honorable, they were installed in Dijon by their pious and illustrious founder, Pierre de Bérulle, of whom God afterward made use for the establishment of the Oratory, and in whom were

[1] Letter of June 8, 1606.

[2] This was the opinion of Père Dominic Bagnez, who had heard the confessions of both St. Teresa and Mother Anne of Jesus. See *Vie de la Bienheureuse Marie de l'Incarnation*, by Monseigneur Dupanloup, Bishop of Orléans. Paris, 1854, vol. ii. p. 39.

united that authority of genius and that splendor of virtue which recalled the happiest ages of the Church. The enthusiasm with which such scenes were greeted in the year 1605, in a city so monastic in its associations as Dijon then was, may be well imagined. Everybody pressed into the poor little chapel of the new convent in Rue Charbonnerie. They wanted to hear "the good Spanish Mothers sing;" they wanted to see them, too, and inhale the perfume of piety that breathed through their grate. Madame de Chantal was not among the last. One morning whilst giving Holy Communion, Cardinal de Bérulle noticed in the crowd pressing forward to the Holy Table a modest and devout figure, clad as a widow. On his return to the sacristy he asked who that young widow was. When told that she was the Baroness de Chantal, he said: "That lady's heart is an altar upon which the fire of divine love is never extinguished. That fire will become so intense, that it will consume not only the sacrifice, but the altar itself." Shortly after, the Cardinal saw Madame de Chantal again, and had long conversations with her. During his whole after-life, he declared that one of the most signal favors God had ever bestowed upon him was his acquaintance with this great soul.[1]

Contact with Carmel aroused Madame de Chantal's enthusiasm. Full of ardor for corporal austerities and eager for sacrifice, she persuaded herself that God was calling her to embrace that kind of life.

Happily, God grants to directors the light that He withholds from souls under their guidance. Notified by Madame de Chantal of the new attraction that she thought she experienced, St. Francis de Sales hastened to interpose mildly, humbly, and prudently, but very firmly. "I have often thought over this matter," he wrote, "and I have begged for grace in the Holy Sacrifice and elsewhere; and, not only that, but I have begged the devotions and prayers of others better than myself. And what have I learned so far? That one of these days, my child, you are to quit all." St. Francis de Sales had never before spoken so clearly. He added: "I say *all*, but that it will be to enter religion (among the

[1] Deposition of Mother Favre de Charmette.

Carmelites) is very doubtful. I am not yet certain as to that. . . . Understand me, for the love of God: I do not say *no*, but I say that I have not yet found a reason to say *yes*. . . . And know that in this matter I have so completely laid aside my own inclination, in order to seek the will of God, as I have never before done. And nevertheless, the *yes* has never yet found a place in my heart; and the *no* is always firmly fixed there." Having thus clearly announced to Madame de Chantal that, on the one hand, she should some day quit all, and, on the other, that it would not be to enter among the Carmelites, St. Francis de Sales added, alluding vaguely to the project he was maturing for the future, but of which he did not yet wish to speak: "Give me leisure and time to pray more and to get prayers for this intention. And, besides, before I decide, it will be necessary for me to speak with you as I desire, which will be next year, God willing. And after all that, I should not wish you to act in this matter upon my opinion alone, unless you feel great interior peace and fully acquiesce in my views. When the time comes, I shall communicate them to you in full, and if they do not calm your soul, we shall ask the advice of some one else, to whom God will, perhaps, more clearly manifest His good pleasure."[1]

In St. Francis de Sales we behold always the same character: prudence, humility, distrust of self, and readiness to receive light from others. Such is the character of all Founders of Religious Orders in the Church of God.

St. Chantal's obedience was not less admirable. At her director's word she renounced what she believed to be her vocation, and disengaged from everything, dead to her own will in a matter in which it is usually deemed allowable to seek self, she humbly waited until God, who had enkindled in her so ardent a desire for the religious life, should point out the road to it, and furnish her with the means of entering upon it.

Let us also render homage to the Carmelites, and especially to Mother Marie de la Trinité. Whatever joy she may have experienced at the first mention made by Madame

[1] Letter of August 6, 1606.

de Chantal of her project, either on account of the friendship already arising between them, or because of the *éclat* so great a soul would cast upon the rising Institution, she allowed no human thought to influence her in the matter. "Madam," was her reply, the first time the Baroness broached the subject, "when you shall have accomplished what God requires of you through the medium of the Bishop of Geneva, we shall think of responding to your desires." At another time, inspired by God, she made her the following reply, which has become celebrated: "No, no, Madam, St. Teresa will never have you for a daughter. God wishes you to be the mother of so many children that you will be her companion."[1]

Although Madame de Chantal renounced her project of joining the Carmelites, she loved and visited them as before. Whenever Cardinal Bérulle preached or said Mass there, she and Madame Bruslard were to be seen among the crowd. When the humble M. Gallemand came to make the canonical visitation of the convent, Madame de Chantal appeared at his confessional. Did the good Carmelites receive from Paris any very pious book, redolent of the love of God, after having read it themselves, they hastened to send it to Madame de Chantal.[2] In a word, she was always at the parlor-grate; and, as the Prioress, the Venerable Mother Anne of Jesus, the Sub-prioress, Mother Isabelle des Anges, and the other members of the community were Spaniards

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 165. Mother de Chaugy attributes the words cited above to Mother Anne de Saint-Barthelémy. But as, on the one side, this mother was never at Dijon, and, on the other, the Baroness de Chantal never visited Paris before she founded the Visitation Order, there results thence a difficulty which made us hesitate a long time upon this point in our first edition, and, not being able to admit the fact, we knew not how to explain it. Fortunately, we have since had an opportunity to read the *Chronicles of the Carmelite Order* now in press in Troyes, and we find that it was Mother Marie de la Trinité, and not Mother Anne de Saint-Barthelémy who had dissuaded the Baroness de Chantal from entering Carmel (vol. iii. p. 463). This explains the case, since Mother Marie de la Trinité lived in Dijon, and Mother de Chantal, as we shall see, contracted a most intimate friendship with her.

[2] See St. Francis de Sales' letters of 1606 and 1607.

and understood but little French, she used to ask for Mother Marie de la Trinité, the only Frenchwoman among them, and who, consequently, served as interpreter.

When a secular lady aspiring to perfection contracts such friendship with a nun, she is insensibly led to ask or receive spiritual advice from her. If such advice were always given with discretion and submitted to him who alone has received from God the authority to direct souls and the light not to lead them astray, there could be no objection to such intercourse. But this is not always the case. The good Mother Marie de la Trinité, charmed with the holy dispositions of Madame de Chantal, undertook to direct her, and, conjointly with another, who is not named, began to give her advice not very prudent.

Madame de Chantal's prayer seemed too simple, too ordinary for a person of virtue so exalted. The pious Carmelite advised her to omit preparation for prayer, more freely to abandon herself to the action of the Holy Spirit, to make scarcely any use of the imagination and understanding, to allow her heart to act alone; in a word, she wished her to pass from the first degree of prayer to the second. It is interesting to see with what prudence St. Francis de Sales interposed between his penitent and her over-zealous advisers. "I have been thinking over what you wrote to me about M. N—— having advised you not to make use of the imagination, nor of the understanding, nor of long prayers, and of the good Mother Marie de la Trinité having told you the same thing with regard to the imagination."

The saint could not be of this opinion: "It is impossible," he wrote, "not to make use of the imagination nor of the understanding in prayer; but to make use of them only to move the will, and the will being once moved, to employ it more than the imagination and the understanding, ah! that should, undoubtedly, be done. There is no need of the imagination, this good Mother says, to represent to one's self the sacred humility of the Saviour; not, perhaps, for those who are already far up the mountain of perfection; but for us, who are still in the valley, although desirous of ascending, I think it expedient to make use of all our faculties, and of the imagination also." With charming grace he adds:

"Let us, my dear child, remain a little longer in these low valleys. Let us still kiss the Saviour's feet. He will call us to His sacred lips, when it so pleases Him. Do not give up this method, until we meet again." [1]

Nor was St. Francis de Sales willing for Madame de Chantal to omit the preparation for prayer. "As to those rules for prayer that you have received from the good Mother Prioress, I shall say nothing about them at present. Only, I beg you, as far as you can, to learn the reason of all this; for, to be candid with you, although two or three times last summer, having placed myself in the presence of God without preparation and without any plan, I found myself exceedingly well off near His Majesty, with only a very simple and uninterrupted feeling of love, almost imperceptible but very sweet, yet I never ventured to stray from the high-road and to make a habit of it. Somehow or other, I like the method of our holy predecessors and the simple-minded. I do not say that, when the preparation has been made and we feel attracted to that other method, we ought not to follow the attraction; but to make it a rule not to prepare ourselves seems to me a little undesirable. As, likewise, to leave God abruptly, without thanksgiving—that cannot be usefully done. However," he humbly adds, "I speak simply before Our Lord and to you, to whom I can speak only simply and candidly. I do not think that I know so much as not to be very glad, nay, extremely glad, to give up my opinion and to follow that of those who, for many reasons, ought to know more than I. I speak not only of this good Mother, but also of persons of much less merit."

We see with what wisdom St. Francis de Sales guarded Madame de Chantal against delusive attractions and imprudent advice, and still detained her, notwithstanding her eminent virtue, in those first degrees of prayer, which are the safest, and which should be abandoned only with humility and with the certainty that God wishes us to ascend higher.

He displayed the same wisdom, the same firmness in preventing her from embracing those severe mortifications that would have enervated her soul by exhausting her body.

[1] Letter of April, 1603.

She had always inclined to corporal austerities, and her acquaintance with the Carmelites increased her attraction for penance. It was no longer enough for her to fast on Friday, take a light supper on Saturday, and use the discipline twice a week, all of which had been allowed her by St. Francis de Sales. She now desired to retire very late, rise very early, and interrupt her sleep by prayer and acts of penance. But upon this point the holy Bishop of Geneva was inflexible. This experienced director knew that nature demands a certain amount of sleep; that if granted to it, the body is capable of greater efforts, but if denied it, it sooner or later sinks under privation, and that sometimes irremediably. He had, consequently, directed his fervent penitent to take from seven to eight hours' sleep.[1] He was very strict upon this point, and reproved the least infraction of it. "I commence with your retiring to rest and your rising in the morning. Why do you act thus, my dear child? No, positively, the mind must not be oppressed by overtasking the body. We should not injure ourselves in that way, women especially, for we are worth nothing the whole day after."[2] Nor was he less vigilant with respect to food, which, like sleep, is in a certain measure indispensable. In fact, sleep and food are the two things over which the director of a soul inclined to the practice of corporal austerities ought to watch with the greatest care.[3]

Thus did Madame de Chantal's soul develop, thus did it attain an exquisite degree of maturity, under guidance so wise. With ardent aspirations after perfection, and in particular after its acme, the religious life, with eager longings after penance and sacrifice, with a habit of recollection and attention to the presence of God that nothing could interrupt, Madame de Chantal felt growing within her that hunger for the Holy Eucharist which is the sign of perfection. Up to the year 1606, however, although honored with the

[1] Letters of October 14, 1605, and June 8, 1606.

[2] Letter of February 5, 1608.

[3] "To eat little, labor much, and refuse sleep to the body whilst the mind is harassed, is like wanting to get much work out of a worn-out and ill-fed horse." (Letter of St. Francis de Sales to Mother Angélique de Port-Royal, September 12, 1619.)

gift of miracles since 1601, St. Francis de Sales allowed her Holy Communion only on Sundays. Not until June 8, 1606, did he permit her to communicate on Thursdays also. After some beautiful words upon the Blessed Sacrament, for it was the octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi, he wrote as follows: "Ah! shall we not partake of His Divine Flesh a little more frequently? Oh, how sweet and nourishing it is! I think it will be well to receive it one day in the week, Thursday, besides Sunday, if it can be done conveniently." And he prudently added: "But let it be done quietly, and without interfering with duty." [1]

For eighteen months, from June 8, 1606, till January 24, 1608, Madame de Chantal made only two Communions in the week. It was not until the Lent of 1608 that she was permitted to approach more frequently, and then only because of her great desire for the Sacred Food. "You tell me," wrote St. Francis de Sales, "that you are more than ever famished for Holy Communion. Humble yourself very much, my child, and warm your breast with the holy love of Jesus Christ Crucified, that you may be able to digest spiritually this Heavenly Food; and since he who complains of hunger asks plainly enough for bread, I tell you, my child, yes, go to Holy Communion this Lent on Wednesdays and Fridays and Our Lady's day, besides Sunday. Oh! when, my dear child, when will Jesus Christ live entirely in us?" And after one of those beautiful doctrinal expositions on the effects of the Holy Eucharist, so familiar to St. Francis de Sales, he continues: "I did not mean to say so much upon this point, but I easily forget myself when I am with you; and besides, we have both just come from that holy refection, for it is Thursday, and on that day we abide with each other, and our hearts, it seems to me, meet in this Holy Sacrament." [2]

Thus did Madame de Chantal advance slowly, but surely, from one Communion a week to two, then to four, in proportion to her spiritual progress and her desire. St. Francis de Sales appears throughout admirable for his prudence.

The more she advanced under his skilful hand, the greater

[1] Letter of June 8, 1606.

[2] Letter of January 24, 1608.

was the admiration she felt for her holy director. The latter, on his side, the more he studied the soul of his humble penitent, the more he was charmed with the wonders that he daily discovered; and from this mutual admiration, which each hid from the other, there resulted that beautiful Christian friendship of which we have hitherto seen but the beginning. But it is now at its meridian. It shines now with its purest light. It has a sublimity, a transparency, a strength, a light, a confidence, a fire united with a holy jealousy, that ravish the soul. This would be the moment to study it, if such things could be submitted to study, and if they allowed the soul any other liberty than that of contemplating them in deepest humility. "O my child," wrote St. Francis de Sales, "when shall we be saints? Be a saint, my child, my sister, and pray that I, too, may become one. And, indeed, what have we to do in this world, if not to pray, to suffer, to love our sweet Saviour, and to allow ourselves to be consumed by His love! Oh, how I wish you this happiness of suffering for Jesus Christ!"

And again: "My child, I must tell you that I have never before so clearly seen that you are my child as I now see it. Yes, I am more than ever yours in Jesus Christ, and I wonder at this development. Ah! we should also increase our courage to serve God as resolutely and bravely as we can. Why, think we, has He made one single heart of two, unless that this heart should be extraordinarily resolute, brave, courageous, constant, and loving in its Creator and Saviour, through whom and in whom I am yours?" [1]

These sentiments are constantly repeated: "Ah! my child, how many perfections I wish you! . . . My child, if the shedding of my blood could make you a saint, how willingly should I submit to death! . . . Oh, how tenderly and ardently I cherish the bond of our direction! I pray night and day for your advancement." [2]

Here we see that holy jealousy alluded to above, which is the mark and the glory of elevated affections. It bespeaks a soul that has conquered the world and soared above the earth.

[1] Letter of June 5, 1610.

[2] Letters of December 29, 1609; January, 1608, etc.

Madame de Chantal, on her side, was not less zealous for the spiritual welfare of St. Francis de Sales. "Ah!" wrote the holy Bishop to her, "with what consolation I read your words in which you say that you desire the perfection of my soul almost more than that of your own! That is being a true spiritual child. But give what rein you will to your imagination, it will never reach that degree of God's love that I wish you to possess." [1]

For a long time Madame de Chantal limited herself to these general desires; but gradually becoming bolder, from the year 1606 her letters are full of recommendations, wishes, requests, and sometimes of gentle reproaches. Once she asked him if he made his meditation regularly: "You gave me great pleasure," answered the saint, "by asking in one of your letters whether I made my meditation. O my child, certainly, always inquire after the state of my soul; for I know well that your curiosity in this matter arises from the ardor of the charity you feel for me. Yes, my child, by the grace of God, I can say now, better than formerly, that I make mental prayer, because I do not omit it a single day. And it seems to me that I am fond of it and would be delighted if I could make it twice a day; but that is impossible." [2] Again, she ventured to exhort him to humility. "O my dearest child," replied St. Francis de Sales, "what pleasure you give me in recommending to me holy humility! For know when the wind shuts itself up in the valleys among our mountains, it blights small flowers and uproots trees; and I, who am placed somewhat high in my episcopal office, I am more injured by it than others. O Lord, save us! Command these winds of vanity, and there will be a great calm." [3]

Again, she requested him to give up those night-watches, those evening-studies that were wearing him out: "Do you know, my child, what I will promise you? It is to take more care of my health, although I have always been more careful of it than it deserves; and, thank God! I feel very well now, since I have entirely given up my night-studies

[1] Letter of September 14, 1606. [2] Letter of September 6, 1607.
[3] Letter of 1609, month not given.

and writing, and I take my meals more regularly, too. But, believe me, your request has a good share in this resolution; for I like very much to satisfy you, but with a certain liberty and sincerity of heart, so that this affection seems to me like dew gently moistening my heart. And, if you wish me to tell you all, it did not act so gently when God first sent it (for it certainly comes from Him), as it does now that it is exceedingly strong and, as it appears to me, always becoming stronger, although without agitation or impetuosity. But this is too much on a subject of which I wanted to say nothing." [1]

This heavenly affection was, in fact, daily increasing. Its calm intensity, its holy confidence, give us an idea of that eternal love which will unite souls in God. "Live God, my child!" wrote St. Francis de Sales, "either God or nothing; for all that is not God is either nothing or worse than nothing. Dwell entirely in Him, my dear child, and pray that I, also, may live in Him alone. And in Him, let us ardently love each other, my child, for there we shall never be able to do so too much or enough. Oh, how delightful to love without fear of excess!" [2]

And again: "Courage, courage, my child, Jesus is ours! May our hearts ever belong to Him! He has made me, my dear child, and still daily makes me more, it seems to me, at least more sensibly, more sweetly, wholly, unreservedly, only, inviolably yours, but yours in Him and through Him." [3]

Lastly: "It is true, my dear Mother, that I have a particular light, which convinces me that our union of heart is a work of the great Uniter; and, therefore, I shall hereafter not only love, but also cherish and honor this unity as something sacred." [4]

We have now laid before our readers, without veil or disguise, the incomparable friendship between St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal. In it we behold more admiration and veneration than tenderness. But in their mutual effusions of heart, each was obliged carefully to conceal the

[1] Letter of June 8, 1606. [2] Letter of January, 1611.
[3] Letter of June, 1607.
[4] Migne edition of *Lettres*, vol. v. p. 1655.

admiration felt for the other; otherwise we might soon be able to measure their humility by their alarm. In his capacity of spiritual father and director, St. Francis de Sales kept a closer watch over his pen in this respect. It was only in his letters to Madame de Charmoisy and Madame Bruslard that he allowed his admiration for Madame de Chantal to appear.

But the latter was not so successful in restraining her pen.

"Now that I think of it," wrote St. Francis de Sales to her, "I must forbid you to use the word saint when you write about me; for, my child, I am more *feint* than *saint*. That expression almost led me to withhold your letter from Madame de Charmoisy; but the thought of the consolation it would give her prevented me from doing so." [1] And on another occasion he wrote: "My child, you do not write according to my wishes, neither to my mother nor to Madame de Charmoisy, when you say: 'Our good and holy Bishop;' for, instead of these good ladies reading *foolish* Bishop" (*sot évêque*) "as it ought to be, they read *holy Bishop*" (*saint évêque*). "I know that, in St. Jerome's time, all Bishops were called holy, on account of their office, but that is not now the custom." [2] And finally: "I am but vanity and pride, and yet I do not think so highly of myself as you think of me. I wish you knew me better. It would not prevent your feeling entire confidence in me, but you would not make much account of me, and you would say: 'Behold the reed upon which God wills me to lean. I know that God wishes it, nevertheless the reed is a worthless thing.' Yesterday, after reading your letter, I took a couple of turns in my room, thinking with tears in my eyes of what I am and of what others esteem me." [3]

Ah, how consoling to turn from the books of the day, from their commonplace, vain, or criminal converse, to language such as this! We seem to be no longer on earth. We fancy

[1] Letter of January 24, 1608.

[2] Unpublished letter, bearing no date and belonging to the Convent of the Visitation, Montélimart.

[3] Letter of October 28, 1608.

we are listening to those seraphs of whom Isaias tells us that they constantly incite one another to adore, praise, bless, and love Him who made them, and who incessantly proclaim through the spheres of heaven those words of magnificent light and love: Holy, holy, holy!

Meanwhile the year appointed by St. Francis de Sales for the examination of Madame de Chantal's vocation was drawing to a close. Our saint, consequently, prepared to go to Annecy, resolved upon perfect indifference, and with the sole, but most ardent, desire to acquiesce in all that God might demand of her through her director.

A remarkable act of obedience sanctified the journey. May 30, 1607, was the day fixed by St. Francis de Sales for Madame de Chantal's arrival at Annecy. Unforeseen circumstances having delayed her departure, she made long stages on horseback, and even travelled the whole of one night in the midst of a violent thunder-storm, in order to reach Annecy on the day specified. Her holy director noticed her exhaustion and asked why she was so fatigued. "I did not think any pretext sufficient," was her reply, "to excuse me from arriving to-day, as you had ordered." The saintly Bishop smiled and reminded her of what he had told her so often, that his directions were not to be interpreted so literally, and that the mildness of his intention was to be considered more than the rigor of his words.

It was still four or five days before Pentecost. St. Francis de Sales employed them in listening to the account of all that had taken place in his penitent's soul during the past year. He seriously studied her attraction and desires, though imparting to her none of his plans concerning her future. He merely told her to pray earnestly and try to confirm her soul in that sentiment of indifference, which is certainly the surest state for one who wishes to know the will of God.

On Whitmonday, after Mass, he called her. With a serious countenance, and in the tone of one absorbed in God, he said:

"Well, my child, I have decided what I shall do with you."

"And I, my Lord and Father," was the reply, "am resolved to obey you."

She then fell on her knees before him. The holy prelate allowed her to remain in that posture, whilst he stood about two steps from her.

"Yes, yes," said he; "well, then, you must be a Poor Clare."

"Father, I am quite ready."

"No," he resumed, "you are not strong enough. You must join the Hospital Sisters at Beaune."

"Whatever you please."

"That is not yet what I wish," continued St. Francis de Sales. "You shall be a Carmelite."

"I am ready to obey."

After thus trying her, and finding her willing to obey, he said:

"No, none of these vocations suits you," and then he began to lay before her the plan and general idea of the Order of the Visitation.[1] "To this proposition," our saint afterward wrote, "I suddenly felt great interior acquiescence, together with a sweet satisfaction and light that assured me of its being the will of God. I had not felt this at the other proposals, although my soul was entirely submissive to them." St. Francis de Sales also experienced in the depths of his heart an indescribable feeling of confidence.

"My child," he said to the saint, "have courage. Everything concurs to confirm me in this project. I see great difficulties in its execution, and I do not see the means of removing them; but I feel sure that Divine Providence will do it by ways unknown to creatures."

It was thus that Madame de Chantal attained, by many circuitous routes, the knowledge of the supreme end of her existence. God had created her to become the Foundress of an Order in His Church, that is to say, to participate, in an ineffable manner, in that spiritual paternity which springs neither from flesh nor from blood nor from the will of man, and which God alone can communicate, since He alone is its source. In her very childhood the work of preparation for her sublime mission was commenced. First, Almighty God

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 82.

gave her a strong soul, because no work is more difficult, none calls for more labor, than the foundation of a Religious Order. At the same time, He stamped upon her countenance a kind of stern beauty, a singular mingling of sweetness, humility, vigor, and holy ardor, which opened hearts to her and made all bow before her. That these elements should develop with masculine vigor, He withdrew from her at an early hour the caresses of a mother, and placed her under the sole guardianship of her father, a man of faith and character, from whose heart she imbibed the spirit of self-sacrifice. To this paternity of consanguinity He added a second paternity whose influence was still more wonderful. St. Francis de Sales finished the work begun by President Frémyot, and tempered by his sweetness the ardor and energy which the latter had communicated to his daughter. And, as the Order of the Visitation was to receive both virgins and widows, God allowed Madame de Chantal to pass successively through the different phases of life, to be, in turn, daughter, wife, mother, and widow, that she might thus acquire all the experience of which she would afterward stand in need. Moreover, because the religious life is a life of interior trial and crucifixion, she was for many years overwhelmed by painful temptations, that the spouses of Jesus Christ might have a mother who, having been tried more than they, would know how to compassionate their infirmities. In fine, called to quit all for God, all was given to her that could make her sacrifice a brilliant one. She had birth, beauty, wealth, illustrious relatives, parents whom she devotedly loved, and four charming and intelligent little children. It was from the midst of all this happiness that she passed to the humility of the cloister, teaching the world that all earthly joys, even the most elevated, the purest, and the most legitimate, pale before the great happiness of loving and serving God, of immolating self for His glory.

CHAPTER XI.

SOME OF MADAME DE CHANTAL'S FUTURE COMPANIONS BEGIN TO HEAR THE CALL OF GOD: MADEMOISELLE FAVRE—MADEMOISELLE DE BRÉCHARD—MADEMOISELLE DE CHÂTEL—MADEMOISELLE DE BLONAY—ANNE-JACQUELINE COSTE.

1608.

Madame de Chantal was not the only one chosen by God at that stormy period to labor at the revival of the Christian spirit by the foundation of a Religious Order. Whilst the divine light was gradually revealing to her the designs of God, there were, in Burgundy and Savoy, other souls, seized with the same disgust for the world, importuned by grace, but uncertain what path to take, and like her awaiting that ray of light which would reveal to them their vocation. They little suspected that God had destined them for the same work.

The first in time, and, perhaps, the most distinguished, was Marie-Jacqueline Favre, a daughter of the President of the Parliament of Savoy.[1] She was eighteen years old, very intelligent, and possessed of solid judgment. Her heart was as open as her countenance, and her beauty was of that grave style so valued in the sixteenth century. Many suitors disputed her hand; but her independent spirit could not brook even the idea of marriage. She thought widows alone happy. "If they would assure her that her husband would die two hours after the ceremony, and thus leave her free, she would consent to be married!" The idea of a convent, however, never once entered her mind. She looked with horror upon everything that could restrain her liberty.

[1] *Les Vies des quatre premières Mères de la Visitation*, by Mother de Chaugy. Annecy, 1659, 4to.—*La Mère Marie-Jacqueline Favre.*

It was not that this high-spirited girl was a stranger to the love of God; but the liberty of youth, the dissipation of the society that surrounded her, and that passion for independence which led her to reject every species of control, were driving that love to a remote corner of her heart. "When I felt in myself," she says, "some little unction and devotion, I sought to increase them, and for that purpose I tried to be present at all the deaths in the town, particularly if the persons were young and pretty. For three or four days after my thoughts used to run upon the nothingness of the creature and of life. After that my good impressions vanished. Intercourse with the world effaced them from my mind."

Fortunately, in the midst of her frivolous and impetuous career, she met St. Francis de Sales. The wise director, "who labored with calm moderation in the guidance of souls, did not urge this one, knowing that she was of a disposition little inclined to subjection." He merely told her to read the *Introduction to a Devout Life*, which had just appeared (1608), required her to confess once a week, in order to maintain her conscience quite pure, and, as she had a mind capable of being moved and charmed by the thought of God, he made her practise every day a quarter of an hour of mental prayer. The rest he left to grace and time.

Never could we imagine by what circumstances this great soul, with her vehement longing for liberty, was brought under the sweet yoke of Christ. Mademoiselle Favre danced charmingly. Her mother having gone to Chambéry on some business, the ladies of the city, who had heard of Marie-Jacqueline's accomplishment, gave a grand ball for the express purpose of seeing her dance. Marie-Jacqueline joyfully repaired to the ball-room, anxious to confirm the renown she enjoyed. At the first sound of the music, the Governor of the province stepped forward to claim her hand for the opening dance. This was the moment awaited by God. A divine dart pierced her heart. "Poor Favre," she said to herself, whilst all around were praising her grace, "what recompense will you have for these measured steps? What fruit will you reap from them, except that people will say: 'That girl danced well'? Behold your reward!"

Deep confusion filled her mind. The thought of death and judgment, the shame of having wasted her youth in frivolous pleasures, penetrated the very depths of her soul, and she left the ball a changed girl, firmly resolved to consecrate herself to God.

Meanwhile President Favre, little suspecting such a change, for Marie-Jacqueline had kept it a secret, was seeking to establish her in the world. A suitor far preferable to all others presented himself. It was Louis de Sales, a brother of the holy Bishop of Geneva, who now asked her hand in marriage. M. Favre accepted him at once, and went, full of joy, to announce the happy event to his daughter. At this news Marie-Jacqueline turned pale, stammered a few words, cast herself weeping at her father's feet, and avowed her project of forsaking the world. It required the intervention of St. Francis de Sales to overcome the resistance of M. Favre, who yielded at last to the appeal made to his faith and submission to God's will. It was more difficult to persuade Louis de Sales, whose hopes had been raised by M. Favre's promise. The holy Bishop undertook this task, also "Ah! brother," he said to him one day on leaving table, "you have a powerful rival. You must resolve to give up to Him your lady-love."

"With the exception of His Highness," exclaimed the fiery young nobleman, whose natural intrepidity was increased by love, "I know of no one so bold as to dare dispute my claim."

"Oh," replied the Bishop with that delicate humor and gracious smile so peculiar to him, "this rival is so great, that you would not venture even to look Him in the face." And as the young man was silent in astonishment, "It is Jesus Christ," said the saint, "whom Mademoiselle Favre has chosen for her lover."

In those days of faith men were capable of sacrifice. Louis de Sales bowed, and, "suffering in his heart a deep wound, he extinguished the pure flame, and immolated to the Divine Will the newly-born passion, as dear to him as life itself."

President Favre, to test his daughter's vocation, required her to remain some time yet in the world. She laid aside the ornaments of her youth, though not without a little re-

gret, and began openly to acknowledge her design of withdrawing into religion, there to live entirely for God. A year passed in this manner. She was not yet acquainted with Madame de Chantal, and had but a very vague idea of the kind of life that the holy Bishop wished her to embrace.

At the same time, another young lady, rich, belonging to a noble family of Burgundy, arrived at the same end, though by a very different route. This was Mademoiselle Charlotte de Bréchard.[1]

Charlotte's childhood was a school of suffering. When only seven months old she lost her mother. At the age of four she was attacked by a disease unknown to physicians, which reduced her to so low a state that she was thought to be dead. Her body was covered with a sheet, and a blessed candle lighted. A short time after, one of her aunts, holding her in her arms, let her fall head foremost from the window of a gallery that overlooked a pond. The child fell among the stones and brambles on the edge of the pond, and was picked up half-dead. Scarcely had she escaped these dangers, when the plague broke out. Her two sisters fell victims to it in a few days. Her father fled, and the servant-woman in charge of the castle, with that heartless cruelty common at such a time, sent her to a house in the village whose occupants had all died, but which was now the refuge of two young men who gained their living at the time by burying the victims of the plague. There for six weeks the child remained on a little straw, with no other companions than the two grave-diggers, who ill-treated her and took from her the little food that was brought to her. Shortly after, an unfortunate servant, attacked by the plague, also took refuge in this miserable hovel. That night the child and the servant ate and slept together. The next day, the woman died almost in the child's arms. The grave-diggers wrapped the corpse in a sheet, and bade the little girl stay and watch it until they returned with a cart. For a whole day the child was alone with this doleful object. As night approached, terror seized her, and she clung weeping to the

[1] *Les Vies des quatre premières Mères de la Visitation*, by Mother de Chaugy. Annecy, 1659, 4to.—*La Mère Charlotte de Bréchard*,

window-bars that she might not see the corpse. Her horrible companions, finding her in tears and determined not to remain alone in the infected chamber, put her on the cart with the corpse, and thus the frightened child assisted at the mournful interment. Three whole months passed in this way, during which she was repeatedly exposed to being devoured by the wolves that were prowling around among the half-buried bodies. No one thought of her. She was obliged to eat the mulberries that grew along the hedges, and the wild fruit of the fields. Wandering alone over the highways, her face burnt by the sun, her clothes in rags and covered with mud, the poor child was no longer recognizable.

When the scourge ceased, Charlotte returned to her father's house. Here she fell into the hands of a whimsical governess, who taught her less how to read than how to suffer. After this, her father, who had little love for her, sought to get rid of her by placing her in one of those relaxed convents which served as a pretext for Luther to tear down the grates of all monastic houses. There other dangers awaited her. Up to that period she had heard nothing of God, of religion; and now that it was presented to her for the first time, it was under a form degraded, dishonored, unrecognizable. Instead of that peace, that devout silence, those chaste joys of divine love, that heavenly atmosphere, which pervade and vivify fervent cloisters, she saw nothing but the frivolity and dissipation of the world profaning a dwelling not made for such things; she saw religious in name but worldlings in heart, busy with the care of pleasing men, deserting the choir for the parlor, and no longer finding in their life taken up with visits either time for prayer or grace for reflection. Oh, how dangerous for a young and uninstructed person thus to meet the world under the veil and the hypocritical mask of religion! But so magnanimous was Charlotte de Bréchard's soul, that nothing could corrupt it or arrest its flight toward God. Deprived of spiritual assistance, the Crucifix became for her a mute but eloquent instructor. She loved to regard it in long and fervent contemplation, which revealed the science of sciences—that of penance and sacrifice. She had scarcely reached the years

of girlhood, when without a director, following only the inspiration of grace, she thought but of macerating her flesh. Not knowing where to procure instruments of penance, "she took a horse-hair leash, such as was used to lead hounds to the chase, and, having made fifteen large knots in it, in honor of the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary," she commenced to imprint upon her delicate flesh the bloody stigmata of Jesus Christ. She fasted on Fridays and Saturdays, and went twice a day to dress the cancers and kiss the ulcers of seven or eight poor creatures of whom she had taken charge.

The love of God is insatiable. The ardent desire to retire into some austere cloister seized her, and, as she knew no other convent than that of the Poor Clares, she chose their penitential life.

Whilst things were in this state, a mysterious dream astonished without enlightening her. She saw in a splendid hall a magnificently adorned altar, at whose foot was a nun dressed in a costume then unknown in the Church. This nun was performing some function in an extraordinary manner. Among other ceremonies, she took a hunting-horn and blew a sweet strain upon it. Then turning to Charlotte, she asked: "Will you join us?" "Oh, yes, with all my heart!" was the reply. Upon which the nun gave her a spray of flowers, and blowing again upon the mystic horn, she invited a number of other girls to follow her.

A short time after, a celebrated Franciscan Friar began in Dijon a course of instructions which Charlotte obtained permission to attend. For the first time she heard the name of God falling from the heart and the lips of an eloquent man, and it moved her to her very soul. After the instruction, she sought an interview with the religious. She opened her heart to him, and, by his advice, resolved to seek admittance among the Carmelites, who, arriving just at that time in Dijon, were, she thought, the unknown nuns she had seen in her dream. On learning her design, her father shrugged his shoulders, her sister ridiculed the idea, and all her relatives laughed at it. Mademoiselle de Bréchard, nothing disconcerted, confided her trouble to Madame de Chantal, whom she had known for many years, having even

held her little Charlotte over the baptismal font. Madame de Chantal took her herself, and obtained admittance for her among the Carmelites. Neither the one nor the other had then the slightest idea of the future God had in store for both. After one month's stay and in consequence of severe sickness, Charlotte was obliged to withdraw from the too rigorous Rule of Carmel. Upon the recommendation of Madame de Chantal and Madame Bruslard, she obtained entrance among the Ursulines. But her health was still an obstacle, and she was once again forced to return to the world. On leaving the Ursulines, President Frémyot offered to take her to Monthelon, to spend some days in the country with Madame de Chantal, and recruit her shattered health. She joyfully accepted, and it was there that she first saw St. Francis de Sales, who had come, as we shall soon relate, to bless the marriage of Marie-Aimée, the eldest daughter of our saint. Mademoiselle de Bréchard opened her heart to the holy Bishop, who quickly discerned her character and the capability of her soul for great undertakings. Having communicated to her his projects, he asked: "My child, would you be willing to run with Madame de Chantal for the same prize?" This was a revelation. The sprig of flowers seen in vision returned to her mind. "O my Lord," she exclaimed, "with the greatest pleasure!"

"Be tranquil, then, my child," replied the saint, "and think of nothing but of loving Him well who wishes you to be entirely His."

St. Francis de Sales was not deceived. Mademoiselle de Bréchard was a great soul, very ardent, still more generous, and capable of every kind of heroism. She was the most illustrious of St. Chantal's companions. Favored during life with the gift of miracles and repeatedly rapt in ecstasy, she astonished the cloister by her heroic sacrifices. For many years after her death, her body remained incorrupt and exhaled an indescribable perfume. The process for her canonization was even commenced with that of St. Chantal.

A little before St. Francis de Sales met Mademoiselle de Bréchard at Monthelon, he had, toward 1596, found in

Geneva, at an inn, a servant, ignorant, rough, unable even to read, but who possessed great intelligence, a generous soul, and the rarest gifts of grace. In spite of her poverty, her lowly origin, and her humble avocation, she was destined to act a considerable part in the early days of the Visitation.[1]

Anne-Jacqueline had been a shepherdess in childhood; but, at the age of sixteen, influenced partly by poverty and partly by a fear of the isolated life she was leading among the mountains of Savoy, she determined to go out to service. Her master was a Protestant, and lived in Geneva. From the very first he divined the good qualities of his servant, and he used every means to make her apostatize. But the promise of money made no more impression upon her than did the captious discourses of the ministers. Catholic worship being forbidden in Geneva, she had to go every Sunday to hear Mass in a neighboring village, about a league distant. Although this was very displeasing to her master, yet she was so careful not to let it interfere with her household duties, that he could never find a subject for complaint nor the shadow of an excuse to prohibit it.

When her term of service had expired in this house, she obtained a situation in the hotel "*Écu de France*," in Geneva. She was not ignorant of the risks she was running, but she hoped to see there occasionally Catholic travellers, especially priests and religious, to whom she could render service, and go to confession. She was not disappointed. One of the first whom she saw was St. Francis de Sales, who had come to Geneva to sustain against the Protestant ministers the celebrated discussion that led to the conversion of the city of Thonon. Anne Coste, hidden in the crowd, attended the meeting. At the very first glance cast upon the heavenly countenance of the saint, she felt a presentiment of the great graces she was to receive from God through his agency. During the whole of the disputation, recollected in God, she constantly raised her eyes to heaven and begged

[1] *Les Vies de sept Religieuses de la Visitation*, by Mother de Chaugy. Annecy, 1659, 4to.—*Anne-Jacqueline Coste.*

help for the zealous defender of the faith. They who know the secret of Divine Providence and with what love He lends an ear to the prayer of the least of His children, would not be very far from the truth in attributing to this humble servant-girl a share in the success of the conference. It was no sooner over than St. Francis de Sales, whose life was in danger, hastily escaped from Geneva. Anne had not then the happiness of addressing him, but his image was engraven on her memory, and she began earnestly to pray for him.

Two years after, St. Francis de Sales again visited Geneva in answer to the challenge of Théodore de Bèze. He again stopped at the "*Écu de France*," in which Anne Coste was still at service. She recognized him at once, seized his valise, and, under pretext of showing him the way, accompanied him to his room. Then, closing the door, "My Lord," she said, "I have long been begging God for the favor of being able to speak to you." Then handing the holy Bishop a chair, she fell on her knees, and poured out to him the secrets of her whole life. Among his other gifts, the servant of God possessed that of discernment of spirits. He marvelled at the candor, innocence, and simplicity of this humble girl, and, after having heard her confession and given her absolution, he said:

"Would you not like to receive Holy Communion?" "Ah! my Lord," she replied, "it would be my greatest consolation. But how hope for this happiness, since it is not permitted to say Mass in Geneva?"

At this the saint opened his cassock, and drew out a small silver box that was suspended around his neck. It contained the Holy Eucharist, which he always carried with him for the service of the sick or of Catholics deprived of pastors in the midst of a Protestant population. Anne-Jacqueline again fell on her knees and joyfully prepared to receive her God. Suddenly a doubt crossed her mind.

"Ah! my Lord," she said to St. Francis de Sales, who had come to Geneva alone, "you have no clerk. How can you give me Holy Communion?"

"My child," answered the saint, with a sweet smile, "my good angel, who is here between you and me, and yours,

who is at your side, will be the clerks. Is it not the office of angels to assist around the Holy Table?"

By the advice of St. Francis de Sales, Anne did not leave Geneva. She remained there many years, elevating her humble functions of servant to the dignity of an apostolate. She concealed priests, fed religious, and secretly led confessors to the pillow of the sick. The following fact will suffice to reveal her courage and address. After the failure of a siege upon Geneva attempted by the Catholics, she hid over eighty Catholic soldiers in a cellar and supplied them with food for several days, until one by one they made their escape.

Nothing is more beautiful or affecting, however, than the conduct of this humble girl toward her mistress, who, though still young, was dying of consumption. After having, with unwearying patience, nursed her for eleven months, she converted her, taught her Catholic prayers, made her privately abjure Protestantism, and, despite a thousand difficulties, found means to bring her a confessor. When her dying mistress was about entering into her agony, and there was no priest in Geneva to bring her Holy Viaticum, the pious servant hastened to one about a league from the city, but who could not enter it under pain of death. She, holding out to him a very white handkerchief, entreated him to give her a consecrated Host, promised not to touch it with her hand, but to give it with great reverence to her dear mistress, who was dying. Such a petition could not, of course, be granted, and Anne Coste returned with a sad heart to Geneva. But shortly after her return, a French ambassador to the Swiss Cantons alighted at the hotel. As he was going to a country entirely Protestant, he was accompanied by a chaplain and provided with everything necessary for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice. The delight of the pious servant may easily be conceived. She at once confided her secret to the priest, and, when the clock struck the hour of midnight, the Holy and Adorable Sacrifice of the Mass was again offered, after an interval of fifty years, on an improvised altar erected in the most remote corner of that cellar in which so many priests and religious had often been concealed. The sick woman seemed to have been waiting for

this happiness; for she expired a few moments after receiving Holy Communion.

Her mistress dead, Anne withdrew to Annecy, where St. Francis de Sales lived. But so great was the crowd around his confessional, and such the discretion of the humble girl, that, though eager to see him, for three whole weeks she made no effort to obtain an interview. She contented herself with following him wherever he went, to hear his Mass and listen to his sermons, and, above all, his catechetical instructions, in which he excelled. Whilst assisting at one, lost in the crowd, but with eyes fixed upon the speaker, St. Francis de Sales' gaze suddenly fell upon her. The shepherd recognized his sheep. Instantly wishing to give the good girl a sign of recognition, without pausing in his speech, he took in his hands the cross hanging from his neck and seemed to open it,—a touching reminder of the little silver box that he had drawn from his bosom in Geneva and opened to give her Holy Communion. Anne-Jacqueline understood the sign, and, accepting it as an invitation, presented herself to him next day. The saint received her kindly and bade her relate to him, not the history of her exterior life, for that was short, and with Christians always the least interesting, but the history of her soul, of her conscience, and of her intercourse with God. Her simple words filled him with admiration, and from that time he became her regular confessor.

One day, after confession, she told St. Francis de Sales of her earnest desire to quit the world for the honor of serving God in the person of His spouses. There was then only one convent in Annecy, that of the Poor Clares. St. Francis de Sales asked her if she wished to join them.

"O my Lord," she exclaimed, "that is not what I mean!"

"Where, then," he asked, "would you like to serve the spouses of Christ?"

"My Lord," answered the humble girl, "I want to serve the religious that you are going to found."

"And who told you that I am going to found an Order?" asked St. Francis de Sales in astonishment, for he had communicated his project to none but Madame de Chantal, and that under secrecy.

"No one at all," answered Anne-Jacqueline; "but I am continually feeling this in my heart, and I tell it to you."

St. Francis de Sales wondered, and that very day wrote a full account of it to St. Chantal. Thenceforth Anne-Jacqueline's only thought was to become a religious, and, although the holy Bishop told her nothing of his project, she often asked him: "When is the lady coming?"[1]

When St. Francis de Sales met at a hotel in a Protestant country a girl so simple and yet so enlightened, grace was winning another of quite a different rank, amid the balls and splendid assemblies of the French ambassador in Germany.[2] Marie-Péronne de Châtel was a young girl of twenty, rich, handsome, and devoted to music, dancing, and poetry. She possessed remarkable conversational powers, and excelled in all those pleasing, but frivolous, accomplishments that form the delight and ornament of society. She composed songs, ballads, rounds, and sang them with exquisite taste. Loved by the world, loving it in return, and easily led away, she struggled, it is true, but weakly, against its seductions, having no means of defence except a naturally earnest disposition and the strong impressions of faith she had imbibed in a solid Christian education. Her mother, Madame de Châtel, was one of those superior women, so numerous at that period, in whom greatness of character and energy of faith formed a species of beauty very rare in our day. Her life has been written; but it must be passed over here with a single remark, which will suffice to portray the woman. At the age of eighty she crowned a virtuous life by a great sacrifice, entering the Order of the Visitation, and living as a simple religious under the government of her daughter, Marie-Péronne, then become Superioress.

What must have been the education given by such a woman! Up to the age of sixteen all went well with Marie-Péronne. Her piety and modesty charmed her excellent mother. "Notice my little girl," she used to say, "she will far surpass her sisters." But her hopes were soon blasted. Having reached that lovely and dangerous age at which the

[1] Letter of September 29, 1608.

[2] *Les Vies des quatre premières Mères de la Visitation*, by Mother de Chaugy. Annecy, 1659, 4to.—*La Mère Marie-Péronne de Châtel.*

child enters into girlhood, Marie-Péronne suddenly changed. Romances, flattery, her love for poetry and dancing, and her talent for music, gifts so trifling in themselves, but of which the young are so proud, weakened her taste for the things of God, and drew her little by little to the world.

Fortunately, God guarded this soul over whom He had designs so great. The first grace He conferred upon her was that of weariness. She indulged in a constant round of balls and assemblies, she was often inebriated with pleasure, but never happy; and it was no rare thing on leaving these parties in which she had been the most brilliant, to find her bathed in tears. There was in her heart an abyss that was gradually widening and which seemed to her the deeper and emptier the more pleasures she cast into it. Sometimes, in her impetuosity, she would rush to extremes, and then, still adorned with the vain ornaments of the ball, exclaim, weeping: "Marie-Péronne, you will never have peace but in the cloister!" She spoke the truth; but much was to be done before that peace could be hers.

A legitimate, though too tender, affection cast her soul into still greater trouble. A young nobleman attached to the embassy, "endowed with every quality worthy of esteem," conceived a most ardent love for her, and declared it in honorable terms. Marie-Péronne was not insensible, and she found herself on one of those steep declivities down which one descends little by little in spite of one's self.

But the more she trifled with the world, the more did God press her with the sharp spur of His grace. Granada's *Memorial of a Christian Life* fell into her hands. She eagerly perused its admirable pages, in which the holy religious describes the happiness of chaste souls and the inexpressible delights of the love of God. Divided between two contrary seductions and, so to speak, torn in two, she suffered cruelly. "Alas! my God," she incessantly exclaimed, "why dost Thou allow my heart and thoughts to run after other things? Why permit a mortal, whom I neither can nor wish to hate, to gain possession of them? Close my ears, that I may no longer hear the voice of this siren." Thus did she groan at the foot of the altar; but, as soon as the siren reappeared, her heart again inclined "to

all those things that she neither could nor wished to hate." She then returned to her book, and her strength was renewed. Sweet peace fell again upon her soul, at least for a time.

Under the daily increasing influence of this golden book, Marie-Péronne resolved to renounce all that had been the glory and the folly of her youth. "Endowed with a voice most sweet and harmonious," she gave up singing, as well as poetry, "which she had loved more than did any girl of her day," and to which we shall see her return in her old age, charming the cloister with the beauty and heavenly fervor of her hymns. She bade adieu also to dancing, "in which she had once delighted," and despite the solicitations made her, "she would never again appear at the ball given daily at the ambassador's, and where her presence was desired above all others."

Such sacrifices were not made, we may believe, without some cost to this noble-hearted, but worldly-minded girl. Sometimes the sound of the music would reach her room and excite her eagerness for the dance. At such moments she would take up a pious book, "in which she read that death makes every one dance to the same tune," and she kept her eyes fixed upon the tragic picture, till the fear of death had banished her desire to return to the frivolities of the world.

Prayer finished what reading and meditation had begun; prayer, not only earnest, fervent, and continual, but so familiar and confident that we may conclude from it that even in the midst of the world, in its most enticing allurements and excitement, Marie-Péronne had never lost her baptismal innocence. This is, in fact, the characteristic of innocent souls. They enjoy in their intercourse with God an intimacy, familiarity, and, if we dare so speak, a freedom, of which penitent souls can form no idea, and of which they are almost incapable. Whilst the latter cling to their Saviour's feet, kissing and watering them, like Magdalene, with their tears, the former, like St. John, rest their head upon His bosom, and question Him with a liberty from which others would shrink.

For a moment it was thought that Marie-Péronne was

going to bury herself among the Poor Clares or the Carmelites, the refuge, at that period, of all heroic souls; but her health forbade the idea. Not knowing what to do, she had recourse to God, saying to Him with her usual simplicity: "My God, Thou seest my trouble and my weakness. Permit me to tell Thee that, next Whitsuntide, Thou must show me the place in which I am to consecrate myself to Thy service. If Thou wilt not do this, I shall be obliged to enter into a mitigated Order." God heard her prayer, and the day was not far off, in Whitsunweek itself, on which she met Madame de Chantal for the first time. She felt her heart inflamed, and the mystery of her vocation was unveiled before her eyes.

To these first companions of St. Chantal we must add another of eminent virtue. She was peculiarly deserving of a place in the first rank, although she was able to join them only later. This was Mademoiselle Marie-Aimée de Blonay, whom St. Francis de Sales had known from her infancy, and whom he had long been preparing for the work of which she was soon to be one of its glories.[1] Endowed with an excellent and studious mind, the most excellent in the Visitation, and certainly not the least solid, from her childhood she had delighted in high and subtle musings. She possessed a practical knowledge of financial matters and rare ability in the management of temporal affairs. To this was added that innocence of heart which proceeds rather from ignorance of evil than from the struggle of temptation. In her childhood she was surnamed the *little dove*, and at the age of sixty her rare candor merited for her the same appellation. Not very ardent, much less so than Marie-Péronne, and in this respect not to be compared with Mademoiselle de Bréchard, having, perhaps, qualities less extraordinary than Mademoiselle Favre, but more of them, she was, in a word, the least brilliant though, undoubtedly, the most finished of St. Chantal's first daughters. St. Francis de Sales depicted her in a few words, when he called her "*the cream of the Visitation.*"

[1] *Vie de la Mère de Blonay*, by Charles-Auguste de Sales. Paris, 1655, 8vo.

Almighty God had bestowed upon Mademoiselle de Blonay the grace of being born in one of those patriarchal families which are, as it were, sanctuaries of faith. It was a common saying in the province that her father and mother would rather ruin themselves than not help the poor. After a long union sanctified by a holy and indissoluble love, they concluded an admirable contract. On the death of either, the survivor was to make a vow of chastity and devote the remainder of life to the service of the poor or the altar. Madame de Blonay died first, and her husband loyally fulfilled his promise. After having prepared himself, under the direction of St. Francis de Sales, for the sacred ministry, he received Holy Orders, retired to his Castle of Saint-Paul, on the banks of the Lake of Geneva, and there "not only as a father, but also as a priest," resumed the education of his nine children.

Here we have a glimpse of family life in the sixteenth century. Doubtless there existed, and had long existed, many causes tending to the dissolution of the marriage tie: that laxity of morals, so often pointed out in the Councils of the times; that wild call for reform which, whilst proclaiming the liberty of the flesh, was kindling the passions; the long and violent religious wars; the writings of that *infamous* Rabelais (as St. Francis de Sales called him) and of all his disciples,—these and many other causes had, indeed, deeply wounded society; still, in the epoch of which we are now writing, the family was not yet disorganized. It flourished with full vigor in the original beauty communicated to it by Christianity. Those magnanimous and courageous fathers, those energetic and fruitful mothers, those numerous children, that respect for paternal authority preserved even in manhood and whose manifestation honored old age, that worship of duty, to which everything else was sacrificed; that purity and that joy which hovered around the domestic hearth; in a word, all those lovely and holy things which Christianity had created, and which, alas! are so sadly wanting at the present day, were to be found in Burgundy and Savoy in all the families so far mentioned in this history. We make one exception, the family of De Bréchard, a family tainted by Protestantism. And, even in

this instance, we must not forget that Madame de Bréchard was a woman of eminent virtue, who died in the flower of her age, after having given birth to ten children.

Let us return to the childhood of Mademoiselle de Blonay, who even then attracted universal attention. Between the age of four and five she gave decided marks of that acuteness of intellect, that perspicacity, that taste for elevated ideas of which we have just spoken. Her first inquiry was, "What is the soul, and whence comes that reasoning power within me?" She asked numerous questions on the subject. One day, when they were speaking before her about bodily diseases, she asked whether the soul also had its diseases, and who was its physician. Her mother took advantage of these precocious questions to explain to her sin, penance, and confession, subjects terrifying to children, but of which this little girl showed no fear, for she wished "to live the life of the spirit." Another day, when suffering from a violent sick headache, and having heard that we ought to offer our pain to God, she asked, "whether the pains of the body could do the spirit any good." On being told that the spirit develops but at the expense of bodily pleasures, she conceived an earnest desire to suffer thus to promote within herself the development of the spiritual life.

St. Francis de Sales, who was greatly attached to the De Blonay family, and who, at a certain period, when engaged in evangelizing the Chablais, had long made their castle his home, became, as it were, the first preceptor of Marie-Aimée. The child took inexpressible pleasure in gazing upon him, and she was often found hidden behind a curtain watching him. St. Francis de Sales loved to teach her prayers and hymns, answer all her precocious questions, and propose to her little problems, which her quick mind solved wonderfully well.

At the age of ten she was placed, as a pupil, at St. Catherine's, an old abbey of the Cistercian Order, half a league from Annecy. It was there, after three years of that sweet and pious life which children lead in convents, that she experienced the first presentiment of her future vocation. One night, the Christmas Eve of 1606, she was praying at the foot of a statue of the Blessed Virgin, when, as often

happened, her quick and lively imagination was carried away "by a foolish representation of the shepherds around the Crib, their postures, their remarks," etc. An hour passed, and she was still busy with her picture. She then set about making up for lost time, when suddenly a flash of light crossed her mind, and a voice whispered into her ear: "My child, behold my Son who has come to seek a spouse. Offer yourself to Him, and He will accept you." She instantly fell on her knees, and made a vow to consecrate herself to God.

The following night she had a dream that furnished her much reflection. She thought she was at her father's castle. Her mother, dressed in white, after having combed her hair a long time, twisted it around her arm, and took the scissors to cut it off. Marie-Aimée resisted, but her good mother said: "Let me do it, my child, for your hair will be arranged in this way on your wedding-day."

Two years after, to the very day, Madame de Charmoisy, for whose spiritual direction the *Introduction to a Devout Life* was written, invited the Abbess of St. Catherine's to come to Annecy on Christmas Day, to hear St. Francis de Sales preach. The invitation was accepted, and the Abbess, with four religious and four pupils, repaired to Annecy. Marie-Aimée, who was of the number, had with the saint on this occasion a long and important conference, of which she herself gives us a charming account.

The interview took place in a hall contiguous to the chapel. St. Francis de Sales and Marie-Aimée walked up and down for more than an hour, talking about God. The holy Bishop drew from Marie-Aimée "her little manner of prayer," and carefully pointed out to her the snares the devil was already beginning to lay for her. During this holy and pleasing conversation Marie-Aimée experienced a lively consciousness of the presence of God and His angels. The Bishop, who perceived something unusual in her, asked what it meant. She answered simply that it seemed to her she was in the midst of heavenly spirits. "Do not doubt it, my child," was the reply. "God and His angels are here rejoicing at and confirming the good resolutions we have taken together. You must know," he added, "that God has

given me two angels to help me. The angel of Francis de Sales assists me wonderfully when there is question of the correction, the amendment, the good, and progress of my soul; and that of the Bishop of Geneva assists me when I labor for the good of the souls committed to me. And at this moment, my dear child, I feel that my two angels are assisting me, since, in laboring for your good, I am also laboring for my own."

Marie-Aimée de Blonay had come merely to hear St. Francis de Sales preach. At most she had promised herself only to ask of him some advice; but, as the conversation advanced, she felt her heart dilate and drawn to greater confidence, as was the case with all who approached St. Francis de Sales. One by one, all the secrets that she had been keeping in the bottom of her heart escaped into that of the holy Bishop. She told him of her longing after the religious life, of her youthful inclinations, her vow of virginity, the mysterious vision she had had the night following, and her project of entering as soon as possible among the Poor Clares of Évian.

St. Francis de Sales listened attentively and thoughtfully; then, raising his eyes toward heaven, he said with that gentle accent of authority which no one could resist: "Well, my child, since you have revealed your secret to me, I, too, will tell you mine. For a long time I have beheld you in the mirror of Divine Providence, one of a Congregation which will, I hope, contribute to His glory. But I did not wish to mention it to you, because I ought to show respect to your Heavenly Spouse, and allow Him to be the first to speak to your heart. I now ask of you only humility, perseverance, and perfect confidence in me with respect to your design, without mentioning it to any one else."

Three years passed before Mademoiselle de Blonay could follow this call, which was for her the voice of God Himself. Long pleading and many prayers were required to gain the necessary consent. She did not join Madame de Chantal and Mesdemoiselles Favre, De Bréchard, and De Châtel until eighteen months after the commencement of the new Institute. Although called among the first, she was the ninth to enter the Order of the Visitation.

In the year of 1608, the five with whom we have been trying to form some acquaintance had had as yet, with the exception of Mademoiselle de Bréchard, no communication either among themselves or with Madame de Chantal. They were living at a distance from one another, some in Savoy, some in Burgundy, all tormented by grace, all longing after seclusion, seeking a cloistered home, asking for admittance now among the Carmelites, now among the Poor Clares, and all rejected on account of delicate health. Not one of them had the least idea that she was to concur in the great work of the others, and meet, at last, in the same solitude. They were like flowers of different colors, though of equally agreeable perfume, blooming along the highway, in the deep valley, and on the mountain-top, awaiting the hour in which, culled by the same hand, they should be placed together in one same vase, to embalm the altar with one same fragrance.

In closing this chapter, a thought naturally presents itself. We know whence sprang the misfortunes of the sixteenth century. The great ones, the nobles of the land, wrought the widespread ruin. Some paved the way for Protestantism by the immorality with which they sullied the courts of Francis I., Henry II., Henry III., and Charles IX.; the ambition and jealous rivalry of others had rendered the League impossible and, consequently, brought the Catholic Church in France to the brink of ruin. In fine, a considerable number had openly cast themselves into the Reformation, and, not satisfied with betraying their faith, had spared no effort to root it out of the hearts of the people.

Now, in the seventeenth century, it was this very nobility which had ruined all, that God called to the honor of renovating and saving all. See the first names that appear in the Order of the Visitation: St. Francis de Sales and Madame de Chantal, Mademoiselle de Bréchard, Mademoiselle de Châtel, Mademoiselle de Blonay, to which were soon added Mesdemoiselles de la Roche, de Martignat, de Chaugy, de Beaumont, de Chastelluz, and so many others. Everywhere we meet the same spectacle. César de Bus and Madame de Sainte-Beuve founded the Ursulines ; Pierre de Bérulle brought the Carmelites into France, and their first convent

was no sooner established than we see flocking to it women of the highest rank, princesses even, and others of royal blood, bearing into the desert of Carmel youth, beauty, and nobility, burying the most charming gifts, titles the most ancient, under an almost impenetrable veil. Open the annals of the Oratory, of the Jesuits, of the Sulpicians, and even of the Capuchins, and we shall find their pages filled with great names, illustrated by still greater virtues. At no epoch had the nobility a truer or more lively conception of the state of things. They comprehended perfectly that the empire of the sword was declining; that the world was thenceforth to bow to eloquence, intelligence, and virtue, far more powerful than the sword; that force would be employed in vain for the triumph of Protestantism; and that, in the face of an error which denied the divine life of the Church, there was but one answer: *Live divinely.* They saw, too, that it was for those who had done the evil to repair it, and that, even if a prompt and complete return to the Catholic faith imported little to the glory, greatness, unity, and prosperity of France, nevertheless, they owed it to themselves to labor at the work as an expiation. Such were the ideas that inflamed the nobility. No garb appeared to them too poor, no sacrifice too great. They laid aside their escutcheons, they broke their swords, or rather, still grasping that sword which, unfortunately, the world cannot do without, they sent their sons to found the Oratory, fill up the ranks of the Society of Jesus, educate youth, visit the sick, convert the Indian, civilize the negro; whilst their daughters went to bury themselves among the Carmelites, the Poor Clares, and the Visitandines. These were the sweet-smelling sacrifices that did more to check the progress of Protestantism than the exploits of the League and the policy of kings.

CHAPTER XII.

MADAME DE CHANTAL'S DEPARTURE.

1608—1610.

The vocation of Madame de Chantal was decided. After long and ardent desires on her side, after the wisest delay on the part of St. Francis de Sales, it had been definitively resolved that she should quit the world as soon as circumstances permitted, to retire, not among the Carmelites, for thither God had not called her, nor to any other of the Religious Orders then serving the Church by prayer and penance, but to found a new Congregation, whose idea, plan, and general features had been revealed by God to the Bishop of Geneva. Nothing now remained but to seek the means of realizing this project; and here it was that a crowd of almost insurmountable difficulties presented themselves. However, they were happy obstacles, for they gave the two saints an opportunity to display their meekness, their rare prudence, the wise circumspection of their conduct, always useful in undertakings of this nature, but absolutely necessary in the present case, since prodigies of patience were soon to be succeeded by prodigies of fortitude, and because this matter, so slowly and wisely conducted, was to terminate by an act of heroism to which the astonished world has never, perhaps, witnessed a parallel.

The principal difficulty was to free Madame de Chantal from the bonds that chained her to Burgundy. Her venerable father, whose household she directed; her father-in-law, over eighty years old, who, though treating her with unremitting harshness, could not do without her; her son, sole heir of her name, just entering his fifteenth year; and her three little girls, the eldest only twelve, were the ties of love

which bound Madame de Chantal and left her no liberty to follow her vocation.

This first obstacle was aggravated by the necessity of establishing the new Congregation at Annecy, a town not then comprised in the kingdom of France. To both the Founder and the Foundress this measure appeared indispensable. It was at Annecy that St. Francis de Sales, rapt in ecstasy, had seen the mysterious spring whence, though so small, abundant and fertilizing streams were to flow over the whole world. "How could it be otherwise?" St. Chantal used to ask. "Was it not necessary for this vineyard to be planted near the holy Bishop, that his careful hand might daily plant or root up whatever the Divine Father should show him to be best?"

From this obstacle arose another difficulty. Annecy was a poor place, hidden among sterile mountains. St. Francis de Sales, exiled from Geneva, was richer "in virtues than in crowns," and as to Madame de Chantal, the idea of taking a single penny with her on leaving her family had never occurred to her or to the Bishop. This absolute want of means was, however, of all the obstacles the least. It is with works of charity as with those of God. They are made out of nothing. They are never surer of succeeding than when they are commenced with empty hands.

The real difficulty, then, was to tear Madame de Chantal from her family and from Burgundy. It was a difficulty so great, and St. Francis de Sales was so convinced that it was actually insurmountable, that he had conceived the idea of postponing the work for seven or eight years, that is, until the marriage of all her children.

A circumstance apparently unimportant suddenly shed a ray of light upon the darkness. On the Feast of Corpus Christi Madame de Chantal returned from the procession very much fatigued. She was hastening to her room to rest a few minutes before dinner, when she was met in the hall by three or four noblemen. Each offered his arm to assist her up the stairs. At first she graciously declined, but, noticing the young Baron de Thorens, St. Francis de Sales' brother, among them, she said with a smile, "Ah! I wish him for my portion," and took his arm. The words were repeated.

They reached the ears of Madame de Boisy, who thought she read in them an allusion that Madame de Chantal had not intended. The idea of a marriage between her son, the young Baron de Thorens, and Marie-Aimée, the eldest daughter of our saint, immediately occurred to her mind, and she had no rest till St. Francis de Sales opened the subject to Madame de Chantal, which he did that same day.

The proposition both rejoiced and astonished our saint. She foresaw in it numerous difficulties, but she allowed no expression other than joy to escape her; and although she overwhelmed Madame de Boisy with thanks, she dared not make any formal promise, "well knowing how it would grieve the two grandfathers of the little girl to see her leave France."

The octave of Corpus Christi over, Madame de Chantal left Annecy and returned to Burgundy, happy in the knowledge of her vocation and full of hope in the success of her plans. On his part, St. Francis de Sales filled the letters, addressed to her in close succession, with repeated expressions of his joy, of the extraordinary sweetness that filled his soul, and of his certainty that all things would concur in the realization of their hopes.

Everything did, in fact, concur thereto, even those events that would seem at first sight capable of delaying or compromising their success.

Two months after her return from Annecy the Parliament adjourned, and she set out for Thotes Castle, where it was her custom to spend some time with her father, President Frémyot. She took with her Celse-Bénigne, his three sisters, and little Jeanne de Sales, their constant companion. On reaching Thotes, Jeanne complained of a severe headache. No alarm was felt at first, but suddenly the sickness increased, assumed a violent character, and, at the end of a few days, all hope of the child's life was gone. At this news the castle was filled with tears. The children's sobs resounded, nor could their mother conquer her emotion. The thought of seeing die in her arms this child, whom St. Francis de Sales so tenderly loved and whom he had confided to her care, pierced her to the soul. Day and night she bent anxiously over her little charge, watching the flame of life vacillating

to its close. At times she fell on her knees, and offered her own life to God in exchange for that of the child. Then again, distracted at the sight of the progress of the disease, she would beg Our Lord to take one of her own daughters rather than this little girl. But neither her tears nor her prayers availed, and soon little Jeanne was in her agony. It was then that our saint, hearkening only to her grief, fell upon her knees and made a vow to give one of her own daughters to the family of Sales, to replace the one the family of Sales had confided to her. Scarcely had she uttered her vow when she felt greatly comforted, and God gave her to understand that this was to be one of the means of which He would make use to realize His designs over her. "She washed the innocent body of the deceased child as much with her tears as with water," and, retiring to her chamber, wrote St. Francis de Sales an affecting letter, the loss of which we shall never cease to regret.

We may judge of our saint's grief by the Bishop's reply. That grief had been so violent, that St. Francis de Sales feared lest she had scandalized those that saw it. He reproved her for having so yielded to it. "What do you mean, my dear child," he wrote, "by saying that you proved yourself on this occasion to be such as you really are? Tell me, I entreat, what did your heart do? Have you scandalized those who saw your grief? Now, my child, tell me plainly; for, see, I do not approve your having offered your own life or that of one of your children in exchange for the life of the departed one. No, my dear child, we must not only be willing that God should strike us, but we must be willing that the stroke should fall wherever He pleases."

"I think I see you," he continued, "with that courageous heart of yours, which loves and wills so ardently. I like it, for of what good are hearts half dead? But we must make it a particular practice to love the will of God more earnestly, more tenderly, and more amorously than anything in the world. You have, my child, four children; you have a good father, a dear brother, and then, too, a spiritual father, all exceedingly dear to you. Well, should God take all of them from you, would you not still have enough in God alone?"

To animate her to resignation, he cited the example of his own mother, the mother of little Jeanne, the venerable Madame de Boisy, who had borne her child's death with wonderful fortitude. "Sunday morning," he wrote, "she sent for my brother, the canon,[1] and because she had observed the evening before that he and my other brothers were very sad, she said to him: 'I dreamed all night that my daughter Jeanne was dead. Tell me, I beg you, is it true?' My brother, who had been waiting for my arrival that I might break the news to her, seeing this beautiful opportunity to present her the chalice whilst she was still in bed, answered: 'Mother, it is true.' He said no more, for he had not courage to add another word. 'The will of God be done!' exclaimed my good mother, and wept freely for some time. Then she called Nicole,[2] and said to her: 'I wish to rise, that I may go to the chapel and pray for my poor daughter,' and she instantly did what she said. Not a single word of impatience, not a single glance of inquietude, but a thousand benedictions to God, a thousand acts of resignation to His will. Never did I see a more tranquil grief. It was a wonder to see so many tears, but all from pure tenderness of heart, with no sign of rebellion. And yet, it was her dear child! Ah! ought I not to love this mother of mine dearly?"

St. Francis de Sales was making the visitation of his diocese when this sad news reached him, but he went immediately to console his mother. He was himself broken-hearted. "Alas! my child," he wrote in the same letter to Madame de Chantal, "I am but human after all. My heart is more moved than I had ever thought it could be. But the truth is, my mother's grief and yours have contributed thereto, for I was afraid of your heart and of hers. But, as to the rest, O live Jesus! I shall ever side with Divine Providence. He does all things well. What a happiness for this little girl to have been snatched from the world before malice perverted her heart, to have left these miry regions before being defiled by them! You may imagine,

[1] Jean-François de Sales, who succeeded the saint in the See of Geneva.

[2] Nicole Rolland, her maid.

my dear child, how I loved this little girl. I had begotten her to her Saviour, for I baptized her with my own hands fourteen years ago. She was the first creature upon whom I exercised my priestly office. I was her spiritual father, and I promised myself to make something good of her one day. And what rendered her very dear to me (I speak the truth) is, that she was yours. But, nevertheless, my dear child, in the midst of my heart of flesh, which has so keenly felt this death, I was very sensible of a certain sweet peace of mind in Divine Providence, which imparted to my soul great resignation in this sorrow." [1]

This long and beautiful letter, in which we see how saints can love, weep, and submit, calmed somewhat Madame de Chantal's grief. As soon as she received it, she began the special exercise of the love of the will of God, advised by St. Francis de Sales. She wrote in her little note-book the following formula, which she repeated morning and evening: "O Lord Jesus, I no longer wish to choose. Touch whichever string of my lute Thou pleasest. Forever and ever it shall play only this melody: Yes, Lord Jesus, without *if*, without *but*, without *exception*, Thy will be done in father, in children, in all things, and in myself!"

Some days after Jeanne's death, Madame de Chantal, finding herself alone with her father, spoke to him of Madame de Boisy's proposal relative to Marie-Aimée's marriage, and the vow she herself had just made to give one of her daughters to the house of Sales. M. Frémyot was very much astonished. He brought forward a thousand objections. Marie-Aimée's age, the youth of the Baron de Thorens, his own grief at separating from the child (for should she be sent out of France, when would he see her again?), and, finally, the impossibility of gaining the Baron de Chantal's consent and that of the whole family. But these grave objections were met by our saint with two arguments still more serious—her pledged conscience and the honor of uniting her family with that of the Bishop of Geneva. She defended these two motives so ably as to convince her father, and induce him to write to St. Francis de

[1] Letter of November 2, 1607.

Sales an acceptance of the offer. "But I must confess, my Lord," he added, "that no other power than that given by God to my daughter, the Baroness de Chantal, could have succeeded in tearing this little one from my knees, my arms, and my sight."

St. Francis de Sales immediately answered President Frémyot, thanking him for the honor done his family. He wrote to the old Baron de Chantal also, whose consent was a little difficult to obtain. He begged him to believe that he could not confer this honor upon a family more grateful for it than his own, and that, although they might be very far from possessing the merit called for by so close an alliance, they hoped to correspond to it by serving him with entire, humble, and sincere affection. "For myself in particular, Monsieur," added the holy Bishop, "allow me to say that the love, not only fraternal, but paternal, which I bore my little sister has remained in my heart, that I may give it to another still younger, whom Divine Providence has in store for me, and I shall give it to her with a very particular increase of respect and esteem, in consideration of the high estimation in which I hold you, Monsieur, President Frémyot, and His Lordship the Archbishop of Bourges, to say nothing of the affection I owe her mother, your dear daughter." [1]

Madame de Chantal wrote, at the same time, to Madame de Boisy, to express her satisfaction: "Madame, my very good mother, our two grandfathers are talking together, and, by the grace of God, they greatly desire the honor of an alliance with your family. What, then, remains for me to do, except to beg God to make this child perfectly agreeable to you, very beautiful and virtuous, and worthy of so great an honor as that of becoming a member of your holy house. To be the sister of such a man! Oh! what happiness! I shall not yield to my feelings of satisfaction. I supplicate our great God to let this event contribute to His glory, the salvation and peace of our children, and our own consolation." [2]

Three months later, St. Francis de Sales, yielding to his

[1] Autograph letter, in the Archives of Annecy.

[2] *Procès de Canonisation. Partie compulsoriale,* fol. 154.

mother's impatience and, also, with a secret presentiment that these events would hasten the accomplishment of the great work in view, went to Burgundy to present his young brother, the Baron de Thorens, to the Frémyot and De Chantal families. The pleasure on the occasion was reciprocal. Promises were exchanged, the contract was drawn up, although not signed until the following February, and the young Baron de Thorens was affianced to Marie-Aimée de Chantal.

This was a manifest opening for the accomplishment of the great enterprise, which six months before had appeared impossible. The marriage was to take place in a year or two. Madame de Chantal, who could not allow her little Baroness to set out alone, would accompany her, taking with her Françoise and Charlotte, who would continue their education in Savoy. Celse-Bénigne would remain with his grandfather, who already had charge of his studies. Thus vanished the family difficulties, the greatest of all obstacles to the undertaking.

But such is the weakness of the human heart that, after having ardently longed for some far-off unattainable sacrifice, it shrinks, it no longer wishes it, when the object of desire draws near and becomes possible. At the moment of realizing her projects Madame de Chantal was suddenly assailed by great temptations. She doubted her vocation, the success of the enterprise, the will of God, and almost the lights of her holy director. "Ah! well, my dear child," wrote St. Francis de Sales, "your mind has been quite perplexed these two or three days past. That does not astonish me; for your conscience is so delicate and so jealous of what you have resolved upon that you feel very sensibly all that opposes it. . . . Really, my daughter, I am surprised that you are not satisfied that our tree should stand firm and be deeply rooted, but that you wish not a single leaf to stir. Do not be afraid of these trifles interfering with our resolutions, nor with the confidence and security you ought to feel in them and in me. You have no cause for fear. Besides, you have chosen a good, prudent, and learned confessor. Relieve your mind by telling him all our plans, for I have not the least fear of his changing them in any way;

he will rather support you in them. I told them to the Father Rector at Chambéry, without naming persons, and he confirmed me in them. I told them to another great ecclesiastic, and he, too, approved them. I have told them repeatedly to God, but, alas! not so reverently as I should have done; and He has always said Yes. Explain, then, your case clearly to your confessor. Tell him the motives that delay your departure, and then the consideration I have given to the kind of life you are to lead after your departure; and you will see that our plans are from the hand of God. As for myself, I have not the least doubt about them."[1]

Some days after he wrote again: "My child, despise this disturbance, and try to sleep well. I mean, think that you are a little St. John, who ought to sleep and rest upon Our Lord's bosom, and in the arms of His providence. Courage, my child, for we have no other intention than the glory of God. No, no indeed, at least as far as we know; for if we should become aware of any others, we would immediately pluck them from our heart. Why, then, do we torment ourselves?"[2]

As usual, his words calmed Madame de Chantal. "O God!" she used to say later, "what a terrible attack it was! I used no other remedy than to take the Crucifix in my hands and say to myself: 'Daughter of little faith, what dost thou fear? What dost thou dread? Thou art walking upon winds and waves, but it is with Jesus Christ.'"

To these interior pains, by which Almighty God began to give Madame de Chantal a foretaste of the bitterness of the great sacrifice He was about to demand of her, there was added a humiliation followed by a joyful surprise. Bernard de Sales, the young Baron de Thorens, had been preferred to another nobleman who had asked for Marie-Aimée's hand and who, to gain old Baron de Chantal, had enlisted the services of that servant-woman of whom we have spoken. The latter sought to avenge her wounded pride by making to the Baron de Chantal false and calumnious reports about his daughter-in-law, which so embittered the already prejudiced mind of the old man, that he forthwith despatched

[1] Letter of February 5, 1608. [2] Letter of March 7, 1608.

a courier to Dijon, with a letter in which he bitterly complained to President Frémyot of his daughter's conduct. The President was amazed; for despite her confidence in him, Madame de Chantal had never given her father the least hint of what she was enduring at Monthelon Castle. To merit more from her humiliations, she had determined to endure them in silence; but now, urged by her father's letters and commands, she was forced to impart something of her domestic trials to him. The President wept as he read his daughter's letter, and was so affected by her virtue and patient endurance that he passed a sleepless night. The next morning he sent her a letter, "the most lovingly paternal that could be imagined," as well to reproach her gently for her silence toward him as to conjure her to leave a house in which she was treated with such indignity. The holy widow was too humble and mortified to accept such a proposal. She thought it prudent, however, to withdraw for some time from her father-in-law's house. She proposed to her father to go to Annecy, in order to gratify the desire of Madame de Boisy to see her future daughter-in-law, and to return the visit paid them in Burgundy by St. Francis de Sales and the young Baron de Thorens. President Frémyot approved the plan, and the old Baron also having given his consent, Madame de Chantal set out for Savoy, accompanied by Marie-Aimée, the young betrothed, and Françoise. So long a trip would have interrupted Celse-Bénigne's studies; therefore he and Charlotte, who was still very young, were left with their grandparents.

"Oh, how welcome you will be!" wrote St. Francis de Sales from Annecy, as soon as he heard of the intended journey. "Start, I beg you, the very first fine day after your horse has rested. I wish you a safe and pleasant journey and that my little girl (Marie-Aimée) will not suffer from the fatigue. But, if you arrive early in the evening and make her take a long sleep, I hope she will make a good impression. . . . My mother wishes you to rest awhile at Sales, where she will await you, to accompany you here. But do not think that I shall allow you to be there without me; no, indeed, for I, too, shall there await you. I shall set out as soon as I

hear of your arrival. I do not write to your companion,[1] for I shall have time to converse with her at leisure. I confess you have done me a great favor by including her in your party, although I shall probably have to put myself to some expense on her account, that, on her return, she may give a fine account of my magnificence. You see, my heart is already laughing at the thought of your coming." [2]

Madame de Chantal reached Annecy in the first week of Lent, 1609, and was received with the greatest joy by all the De Sales family. Madame de Boisy, in particular, was "so taken up with her future daughter-in-law, that she would have been glad to keep her then." But the time was not yet come. Another year was to pass away before the preparations for Marie-Aimée's marriage and her mother's departure could be completed; for these two events seemed, in St. Francis de Sales' opinion, necessarily dependent on each other.

Madame de Chantal passed the whole Lent at Annecy. God permitted it thus, that her high reputation for virtue might spread in the town and throughout Savoy as a kind of preparation for the projected work. Her old biographers testify to the deep impression she made upon the ladies of Annecy. "A number of ladies, all spiritual children of St. Francis de Sales, went to see her," says Mother de Chaugy, "and returned exceedingly edified. Others went through curiosity, knowing that she was a lady of quality. Toward the worldly she was more reserved, and spoke so efficaciously of the unhappiness to which worldliness leads, that several on leaving her went to dress more becomingly and modestly, which they continued to do ever after. Others even took out their ear-rings, and not only never wore them again, but we know that some among them would not even allow their daughters to wear any, nor to powder their hair, nor to go to balls, so solid and lasting an impression had the conversation of this holy widow made upon them." [3]

[1] Madame Bruslard, who accompanied Madame de Chantal.
[2] Letter, toward the end of February, 1609.
[3] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy.

A young nun named Angélique la Pesse, born at Annecy, and whose mother was one of the ladies of whom Mother de Chaugy speaks, gave at the canonization of St. Francis de Sales still more circumstantial and interesting details of the impression produced by our saint. "Madame de Chantal's example," she said, "wrought in the soul of those good ladies holy impressions, which were increased by the intercourse they had with her during her stay in the town. She gave them very moving exhortations on contempt for the vanities of the world; among other things, she reproved them for not sufficiently covering their bosom, for using powder, and wearing ear-rings. My mother took this to herself, although she was still a very young married woman, and as soon as she went home that day she took out her ear-rings, twisted and broke them so that she might not be tempted to put them in again. She had them made into a gold cross which she ever after wore around her neck. When she came to see me, after I had entered the convent, she used to say: 'This, my child, is the fruit of Mother de Chantal's first exhortation.'"[1]

The perfume of piety which thus escaped from the lips and heart of our saint gradually prepared the way for the foundation of the proposed Congregation. The great example of virtue she gave during the Lent of 1609 completed the already half-won victory. All hearts were gained. She hardly left the church. She attended all the ceremonies, and excited universal admiration by her rare modesty. On Maundy-Thursday, clothed in white, and veiled like the other Sister Penitents of the Holy Cross, she took part in the general procession which started at ten o'clock in the evening and spent the whole night going from one church to the other, visiting Our Lord exposed in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. To unite penance with devotion on this sorrowful night, during which Our Lord, having loved His own who were in the world, drank for them the bitter chalice of His Passion, Madame de Chantal walked barefoot in the procession from church to church, though carefully conceal-

[1] Process of St. Francis de Sales' Canonization: Deposition of Angélique la Pesse, *ad 12 interrogat.*

ing her act of mortification from others. Next day, the anniversary of Our Saviour's death, wishing to give Him a special proof of gratitude, she renewed the vows she had made several years before, and which were in her eyes so many sacred nails fastening her to the Cross of Jesus Christ.[1]

The long stay of Madame de Chantal in Savoy, useful by her influence over others, was still more advantageous to herself, on account of the frequent and confidential conversations she had with her holy director. In them were studied, discussed, and explained the whole plan and constitution of the future Congregation. In them, also, they seriously examined what means they should take to obtain the consent of President Frémyot, of the Baron de Chantal, of the Archbishop of Bourges, and of the whole family; for, in so important an affair, they determined to take no step without the authorization of relatives. They likewise carefully considered the means to be provided for the education of the children and the safe administration of their property, in a word, for their future welfare; for it was impossible for a mother to dream of the religious life without having completely and superabundantly provided for all these things.

After forty days of deliberation, examination, and prayer, all was decided and resolved upon, and Madame de Chantal returned to Burgundy to begin her final preparations. The mind that conceives a great enterprise, the wisdom that maturely weighs the means, the courage and energy that are devoted to its accomplishment, had successively prepared the elements of the future Congregation; nothing

[1] The following is a copy of this renovation, written and signed with her own hand:

"On this day of my Saviour's death, in the year one thousand six hundred and nine, I have renewed my vows with new and incomparable love, wishing to die to myself and to all else forever, in order to live in obedience to the Divine Will, to which I consecrate myself absolutely and without reserve, to obey it in the person of His Lordship the Bishop of Geneva, my very good spiritual Father; therefore, may my Saviour assist me with His grace and receive me, as with all my heart I give myself to Him! Amen.

"JEANNE-FRANÇOISE FRÉMYOT."

now remained but for the spirit of sacrifice to communicate life and fecundity to these elements. For, since the moment in which Jesus Christ redeemed the world by the shedding of His blood, intellect, wisdom, and prudence may, indeed, prepare such works, but they can be accomplished and vivified only by sacrifice.

The first person to whom Madame de Chantal was in duty bound to confide her project was her father. This would necessarily be a painful task. President Frémyot loved his daughter devotedly, and dreamed not of the purpose she had been so long nurturing and which she was now on the eve of effecting. The approach of the dreaded moment in which she was to reveal to him her terrible secret broke her heart; and in spite of her fortitude, it was with trembling anxiety that she sought an opportunity for this first and distressing interview. It took place at Dijon, on the evening of St. John's Nativity, June 24, 1609. The whole family had gone out to see the bonfires which, according to an old custom, were lighted on that day. President Frémyot was the only one at home with his daughter, and he was occupied in his study, where he generally remained until late in the night. Madame de Chantal determined to profit by this opportunity; but when about entering his room, she could not control her feelings. The thought of the pain she was going to inflict upon her aged father, the tears he would shed, the tender reproaches he would utter, almost suffocated her. Her heart beat quickly. She paused, retraced her steps, knelt down, and prayed.

Never do we better comprehend the favor that God has conferred on man by inviting him to pray than in a moment like this. Madame de Chantal rose from her knees strengthened, and with a resolute step entered her father's study. The dim twilight hid his daughter's troubled countenance from the President. Too prudent to introduce the subject abruptly, Madame de Chantal approached it from afar. She began by representing to M. Frémyot the difficulty she experienced in rearing her children at Monthelon Castle. The household was badly directed, and the evil example constantly under their eyes might make a deplorable impression upon her daughters as they grew up. The Presi-

dent promptly interrupted by asking her why she troubled herself on that account. The eldest, he said, would soon be married and confided to the care of Madame de Boisy, who had so long been anxious to have her; and as to the two youngest, it was time to place them with the Ursulines for the purpose of examining their vocation. Celse-Bénigne would be the only one left, but he himself had taken charge of the boy and he would superintend his studies. Why, then, was she tormenting herself?

At these words Madame de Chantal's heart leaped with joy. "My dearest father," she answered with great emotion, "do not be offended at my telling you that, by this good arrangement, I find myself free to follow the call of God, who has been urging me to retire from the world and consecrate myself entirely to His service."

President Frémyot was totally unprepared for such an answer. Tears started to his eyes, and sobs stifled his voice. Madame de Chantal also wept. At last, repressing his grief, the old man, who was almost seventy years of age, and who with a wonderfully strong soul possessed an exceedingly affectionate heart, commenced to reproach his weeping daughter in so tender and moving a manner that God alone, according to the testimony of the saint, could have given her the strength to resist his arguments. To assuage his grief, she told him that it was, after all, only a plan which she had confided to him, as to her devoted and excellent father, that no determination had been taken, and that she had spoken to him confidentially in order to obtain his advice. Observing that her words inspired him with hope, she added that the Bishop of Geneva was acquainted with her project, and that he did not disapprove it. On hearing this, the President reflected for a moment, and said: "It must be acknowledged that the Bishop of Geneva has the Spirit of God. I ask but one thing, that you resolve upon nothing until I shall have spoken with him." The saint promised, declaring that she was ready to yield her opinion, and then left the study deeply affected, but happy at the bright prospect before her.

Some time after, she underwent another trial of the same nature. Having learned that her brother, the Archbishop of

Bourges, had gone to Thotes Castle in Auxois to spend the vacations with his father, she hastened thither to make another attempt to gain her father's consent. Her brother's position in the Church and his piety gave him great influence in the family. Were he once gained to her cause, she hoped that every other obstacle would disappear. But scarcely had Monseigneur André laid eyes on his sister than he told her, "without further preface, that she ought never, never to think of leaving them." He strongly censured her design and tried to convince her that it was the will of God for her to remain with her family. Less restraint is felt with a brother than with a father. Madame de Chantal replied that she could not betray her soul, that she was seeking God alone, that she would in all things obey her wise director, the Bishop of Geneva, even should he command her to go, like St. Simon Stylites, and station herself for the rest of her days on a pillar.

The President continued his opposition. Every time he saw Madame de Chantal he insisted upon her renouncing her project. As he read the Holy Scripture every day, and knew it almost by heart, he used to quote to his daughter texts so skilfully joined together and so conclusive against her departure, that she was sometimes sadly perplexed.

These attacks were crushing her. The sight of her father in tears and her abandoned children was constantly before her eyes. At times it seemed to her that it would be a crime to plunge into grief those that had been so lavish of affection toward her. Certain passages of Scripture, quoted by the President, were ever ringing in her ears. Troubled to the depths of her being, tortured in her dearest affections, Madame de Chantal ardently begged God to send her the light and strength she so greatly needed. One day, whilst pouring forth her soul in prayer as fervent as her grief was intense, a divine light suddenly filled her mind. With that inexpressible clearness known only to souls honored with such favors, she saw that in her affections, most legitimate as they were, the devil was playing the principal part, and she heard resounding in the bottom of her heart the energetic words of the great Apostle: "If I please men, I would not be a servant of Jesus Christ."

It was a weapon sent her by God against the tenderness of her own heart. From that day she prepared with more courage for the last and greatest trial of all, her final leave-taking.

Nothing could be concluded before the arrival of St. Francis de Sales. He came, at last, on October 13, 1609. Marie-Aimée's marriage with the young Baron de Thorens was celebrated in the chapel of Monthelon Castle. The Bishop himself blessed their union, which, though commenced at so early an age, was to be of short duration, but which was to leave the remembrance of sweet and lovely virtue.[1] Who does not regret with us that St. Chantal's historians, occupied with the dramatic scenes of the mother's departure, failed to gather up a single word of the discourse that St. Francis de Sales must have addressed "to that dear couple," one of whom was his brother, and the other "that little Aimée who," according to his own graceful expression, "would be one of the best loved sisters in the world."

[1] Marie-Aimée was almost twelve years old; the young Baron de Thorens was sixteen. Some, little acquainted with the customs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, will, perhaps, be tempted to censure a marriage contracted between mere children. Without entering here into useless discussion, we shall only say that such marriages were at that period very usual in the higher classes of society. The Duchess de Montmorency was married at fourteen (*Vie de Madame de Montmorency*, p. 4); Madame de Capelis, at twelve (*Vies des premières Meres de la Visitation d'Avignon*, p. 3); Mademoiselle de Nantes, at twelve (*Vie de Madame de Maintenon*, vol. iii. p. 392); Henry II., Duke de Montmorency, at thirteen (*Vie du Duc de Montmorency*, by Ducros, p. 8); the Countess de Caylus, at thirteen (*Vie de Madame de Maintenon*, vol. iii. p. 402); Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy was espoused at the age of twelve to the Duke of Burgundy, who was fourteen (*Lettres inédites de la Duchesse de Bourgogne*); and, in our own day, Madame Récamier was married at thirteen (*Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*), etc. In old French society, parents exercised over their children an authority of which we can form no idea. After having married them, they also fixed for them the time at which they might live together. "The newly-married couple," says Dangeau, "shall be separated on the day of their marriage, until they become larger." (*Journal de Dangeau*, May 24, 1685.) I have thought these remarks necessary that no one may imagine that Madame de Chantal hurried this marriage and sacrificed her daughter that she herself might be at liberty.

The day after the nuptials, President Frémyot, St. Francis de Sales, and the Archbishop of Bourges retired apart and commenced to consider before God the important subject of Madame de Chantal's withdrawal from the world. All that time the holy widow was on her knees in the chapel, fervently praying and beseeching Almighty God to enlighten St. Francis de Sales and touch her father's heart. After a long consultation she was called. We can to-day form no idea of what a father was in old French society. The wife, the mother, the mistress of the house, was to her father always a child. President Frémyot multiplied his questions and subjected Madame de Chantal to an interrogatory minute and solemn, as he was accustomed to do in Parliament. She answered with that clearness which was one of the most remarkable of her gifts. She laid before her judges her entire life. She told them first how her inclination to the religious life had been formed and developed, and convinced them of its supernatural character. She next explained the state of her children's property: debts paid, lawsuits settled, misunderstandings cleared up, nothing, in fact, stood in the way of their temporal prosperity. She then spoke of their future settlement in life: her father had already consented to take charge of Celse-Bénigne and watch over his studies, in addition to the superintendence of an excellent preceptor; and Marie-Aimée, the young bride, would follow her husband to Savoy. Françoise and Charlotte, who alone remained to be provided for, she would take with her to finish their education. She concluded by telling her father and brother that "if they would but consider God alone, they would find countless reasons to approve her design." President Frémyot was struck with astonishment at his daughter's prudence. "Truly," said he, borrowing the words of Holy Scripture, as was his custom, "this woman hath considered all her ways and she hath not eaten her bread idle." Her brother was equally astonished. As to St. Francis de Sales, absorbed in God, with a smile upon his lips, he silently observed the happy issue of an affair that had presented so many difficulties.

There was one point not yet considered. It was in which city should the house to which Madame de Chantal was to

retire be established. The President wished it to be in Dijon, in the midst of her friends and relatives. Monseigneur André preferred Autun, that his sister might more easily attend to her children's property. Then Madame de Chantal spoke, and pointed out the absolute necessity of establishing the new Congregation in Savoy; first, because the undertaking should be subject to the personal superintendence of St. Francis de Sales, and, secondly, the little Baroness de Thorens was too young to be allowed to depart alone, and that she herself ought to accompany her to Annecy, and remain some years, at least, near her. There was nothing, she continued, to prevent her taking Françoise and Charlotte with her, and by this arrangement all her children, excepting Celse-Bénigne, would be with her in Savoy. With regard to him, she reminded them that, even were she to remain in Dijon or Autun, she would, sooner or later, have to separate from him, as the time was approaching when he would be sent to court or to the army, according to his inclinations. She remarked, moreover, that she could from time to time visit Burgundy to inspect her children's affairs, and that thus her maternal duty toward them would be fulfilled in every respect. St. Francis de Sales supported her arguments, and President Frémyot, "seeing that the holy prelate was walking in Our Lord's footsteps and arranging everything, not only with unflinching energy, but also with meek suavity," withdrew his opposition. The Archbishop of Bourges did the same, and all separated blessing God for so holy a resolution.

An unforeseen difficulty came very near delaying the enterprise. The old Baron de Chantal had to be notified of the proposed step, and President Frémyot undertook the task. But hardly had he opened his lips before the old man, who, despite his ill-treatment, loved his daughter-in-law, began to sob and weep. The President was so moved at the sight that he returned to his daughter and told her that it was absolutely necessary to delay her departure for a year or two, and let the old man die in peace. Our saint, knowing that God awaits not our orders and that it is for us to meet His appointments, calmly but firmly replied: "My dear father, resolutions taken for the promotion of God's

glory admit no delay. I shall gain my father-in-law's consent." And she really did so.

The Sunday following all the inmates of the castle and some of the villagers went to confession to St. Francis de Sales and received Holy Communion from his hand in the parish church. He preached at Mass, and his words were so persuasive, that an atheist who had come to ridicule was converted and entered a Religious Order. Next day St. Francis de Sales bade adieu to this esteemed family. When he gave Madame de Chantal his blessing, he bade her be very humble, that the edifice built upon the immovable foundation of humility might rise to holy grandeur and brave the storms of future ages.

President Frémyot, the Archbishop of Bourges, and Madame de Chantal accompanied him as far as Beaune. We may easily imagine what this journey must have been under such circumstances and with such a party. At Chassange, where the first night was passed, "the people of the inn watched St. Francis de Sales closely. They discovered that, after having slept the whole night on the floor, in the morning he threw himself on the bed in order to tumble it and thus hide his austerity."[1] They reached Beaune very early the following day. Here they were to separate. St. Francis de Sales said Mass at the hospital, gave Madame de Chantal Holy Communion, and then, led by her, visited the whole establishment, pausing at the bedside of the patients and giving them his blessing. "O my dearest and most desired daughter," wrote St. Francis de Sales to her some time after, still under the influence of the sweet impression produced by his journey to Beaune and that farewell in the midst of the poor, "I left you in the hospital at Beaune, full of the desire to love, honor, serve, and adore the will of God, resigned to all things great or small, and your will abandoned to the mercy of His. I left you with Our Lord really received in your breast, and that among the poor of Our Lord. Ah! my dear and very especially dear child, you are my joy and my crown! Be ever thus resigned, heart and soul, to Our Lord's will, my dearest child; and remain, also, in desire in

[1] Unpublished *Mémoires* of the foundation of the Monastery of the Visitation at Beaune. Archives of Annecy.

the midst of the poor. And since it is His will for you still to serve and direct your family, do so in peace and with the fidelity that you owe His holy will." [1]

Madame de Chantal was hardly returned from Beaune when Monthelon Castle was saddened by an event little anticipated. Charlotte de Chantal, about ten years old, fell ill and died almost suddenly. Her mother loved her with particular affection. She had nursed her amid the tears of her widowhood, she had always called her "her angel," and she had rejoiced in the thought of forming her to virtue, for which the little girl showed remarkable dispositions. What, then, must have been her grief at Charlotte's death! She wrote to the Bishop of Geneva to tell him of her loss and to receive from him some consolation. On the reception of her letter, St. Francis de Sales was himself plunged in the deepest affliction. His venerable mother, Madame de Boisy, had just been attacked by apoplexy and paralysis, which in two days carried her to the grave; but, ever herself, her death was as holy as her life.

The saint immediately wrote an account of it to Madame de Chantal, so beautiful and pious, so full of sweet evidence of that tenderness of heart which was one of his most charming characteristics, that we cannot resist the desire to quote a few lines from it:

"You would probably like to know," he wrote, "how this good woman, my mother, ended her days. Here is a short account of it, for I am speaking to you, to you, I say, to whom I have given my mother's place in the *memento* of the Mass, without depriving you of that which you already had; for I could not do that, so firmly do you hold your place in my heart, and in this way you are in it the first and the last.

"This mother of mine, then, went on Ash-Wednesday to the parish church at Thorens, where she confessed and communicated with very great fervor, heard three Masses, and assisted at Vespers. On retiring that night, and finding that she could not sleep, she asked her maid to read to her three chapters of the *Introduction to a Devout Life*, in order to furnish her with pious thoughts, and told her to mark the

[1] Letter xlii. book ii., old French edition.

Protestation, that she might make it next morning. But God, satisfied with her good-will, ordained otherwise; for when morning came, and she attempted to rise, she fell back as if dead.

"They sent for me, and I started without delay with the doctor. On my arrival, entirely blind and drowsy as she was, she caressed me tenderly and said: 'This is my son and my father.' She kissed me, clasping me in her arms, after first kissing my hand. She continued in this state for nearly two days and a half, after which they could scarcely rouse her. On the 1st of March she gave up her soul to God calmly and peaceably, with a countenance more beautiful perhaps than it had ever been. She was one of the loveliest corpses I have ever seen.

"I must also tell you that I had the courage to give her the last blessing, close her eyes and lips, and give her the last kiss of peace at the moment of her death, after which my heart filled up and I wept over that good mother more than I have done since I was ordained."

We may imagine that St. Francis de Sales' own deep affliction rendered him less sensible to little Charlotte's death. He gave it, however, a tear, but one of those tears of joy that the Church sheds over her children called from this world before being sullied by it. "Our little Charlotte is very fortunate to have left this earth almost before she had touched it. Alas! we must, nevertheless, weep a little, for have we not a human heart and natural feeling? Why not weep a little over our dead, since the Spirit of God not only permits it, but even counsels it? I have grieved over the poor little one, though with grief less acute inasmuch as the great sorrow of separation from my mother took away almost all feeling of this second trouble, the news of which reached me whilst my mother's body was still in the house. Praise be to God for this, also! God gives, God takes away. May His holy name be blessed!"[1]

Madame de Chantal deeply lamented the death of Madame de Boisy. She lost in her a holy friend; but, more than this, she lost in her the excellent mother-in-law of her little

[1] Letter of March 11, 1610.

Baroness. It was to Madame de Boisy's eagerness that the marriage between Marie-Aimée and the young Baron de Thorens was due, and it was upon her maternal guidance and support the relatives of the youthful and inexperienced bride had counted when they consented to her going into Savoy. It was now evident to all that Marie-Aimée could not go without her mother, and they who, up to that time, had most strongly opposed our saint's project now urged her to hasten her preparations for departure.

Meanwhile the rumor began to spread that the Baroness de Chantal was about to forsake the world and leave France to shut herself up in a convent. Some wondered, some criticised, some deplored. From the eve of her departure, which was fixed for the first Sunday of Lent, 1610, the roads leading to Monthelon were crowded with the poor hurrying to pay a last visit to their benefactress. Early on Sunday morning the courts of the castle were invaded by an immense concourse of people all eager to see for the last time her whom they styled "Our Good Lady." Foremost in the crowd were the villagers. No sound was heard but cries of grief mingled with the words "*Mother*" and "*Holy Baroness.*" The servants of the household, instead of calming the poor people, wept still more bitterly themselves. Some Capuchins who were present went through the crowd trying to impose silence, but their efforts were vain. It was but a single lamentation, in which the voices of all, of the poor, the servants, men, women, and children, united in one common wail, broken from time to time by sharp cries. They imprecated malediction upon all who had been a cause of trouble to Madame de Chantal. When one poor child cried out, "The light is taken from you, because you wished to extinguish it. Do penance!" sobs and cries rent the air.

During all this time a not less distressing scene was taking place in the interior of the castle. Madame de Chantal was on her knees before her father-in-law, asking pardon for her faults and the trouble she had given him. The old Baron, unable to speak a word, cast himself into his daughter-in-law's arms. All present were in tears. At last Madame de Chantal arose, pressed the repentant old man in a long

embrace, and hastily descended the stairway. As soon as she appeared a cry escaped from the crowd, and all stretched out their arms to her. She passed slowly through their ranks, noticing every one, kissing the children, and recommending herself to their prayers, after which, laden with blessings and moistened with tears, she entered the carriage with the Baron de Thorens, Marie-Aimée, Françoise, and Mademoiselle de Bréchard, and drove to Autun, on her way to Dijon. But the gratitude of the poor and of the inhabitants of Monthelon was not yet satisfied. The crowd also set out for Autun, following the carriage from afar, thus giving their benefactress a pacific triumph.

Madame de Chantal tarried not long at Autun. She was already dead to the world, and her only thought was to strengthen herself for her last and most painful leave-taking. Her time was spent in visiting the numerous relics of the martyrs preserved in that city and the hospitals, to which she left abundant alms as a parting gift. It was also at Autun that she performed an act which proved that the saints, even the most indifferent to worldly things, cherish family ties with the deepest affection. In the crowd that had followed her carriage she perceived a friar of the Third Order of St. Francis. She called him to her and entreated him, for her sake, to return to Monthelon and remain with her father-in-law until he had prepared him for a holy death. This the good friar promised to do, and he faithfully kept his word.

In two days Madame de Chantal reached Dijon, where she was to consummate her sacrifice. Her first act on entering the city was to receive Holy Communion, her viaticum for the journey she was about to undertake, the strength of which her heart had need, on account of the tender ties that bound her to her relatives. She visited, also, Fontaines, to ask of St. Bernard, the great Doctor of the Church, the courage to quit all as he had done, climbed the steep mountain of Notre-Dame-d'Étang, and knelt once more in that chapel to which she had come, in 1604, with St. Francis de Sales, when the secret of her vocation was still unknown to her. Thither she had returned in 1605, to write upon the altar with her blood her first vow of obedience. From that

day she had frequently poured forth at this shrine her joys, her sorrows, and the earnest desire of her heart to consecrate herself entirely to God.

March 29, 1610, the day fixed for her departure, the friends and relatives of the family assembled at the house of President Frémyot. All were in tears. Madame de Chantal alone preserved a calm demeanor, though her countenance betrayed the terrible inward conflict she was enduring. She went from one to another, bidding good-bye, embracing her relatives, begging their pardon, entreating them to pray for her, trying not to weep, and yet weeping all the time. When she came to her children, she was completely overcome. Celse-Bénigne hung around her neck, endeavoring by a thousand caresses to deter her from her project. Madame de Chantal bent over him, covered him with kisses, and replied to all his reasoning with admirable fortitude. No heart, how insensible soever, could bear unmoved "this filial and maternal conversation so sorrowfully loving." At last, exhausted with tenderness, Madame de Chantal quickly disengaged herself from her son's embrace, and attempted to pass on. This was the moment in which Celse-Bénigne, desperate at the thought of losing his mother, threw himself across the threshold of the door, exclaiming: "Alas! mother, since I cannot detain you, you shall, at least, pass over the body of your son." At these words Madame de Chantal felt her heart breaking, and, unable to sustain the weight of her grief, she paused and gave free vent to her tears. The good M. Robert, who was present at this distressing scene, fearing that her courage would fail at that trying moment, said to her: "What! Madam, can the tears of a child shake your resolution?" "No," answered the saint, smiling through her tears, "but what can I do? I am a mother!"—And raising her eyes toward heaven, like another Abraham, she stepped over her son's body.

Just then President Frémyot made his appearance. Sent up in his study, he had been moved by prayer to the sacrifice demanded by God. He took his daughter into his arms, and for some time they interchanged words in a low voice, interrupted by sobs and kisses. None but God knew what passed between these two souls so worthy

of each other. At last Madame de Chantal fell on her knees, and begged her father's blessing, upon which the venerable old man raised his eyes and hands to heaven and exclaimed: "My God, it is not for me to blame what Thou dost. I consent to it with all my heart, and with my own hand I immolate to Thee this only daughter who is as dear to me as Isaac was to his father Abraham." Then, kissing her and assisting her to rise, he continued: "Go, then, my dear child, whither God calls you. Should I never again see you in this world, I shall die happy, knowing that you are in the house of God, and I am sure that you will support by your prayers the old age of a father who permits you to leave him. Will you not, my child?" "Yes, my best and dearest father," was the sobbing reply. After a short silence, the President continued: "Come, let us dry our tears, to honor more perfectly the holy will of God, and that the world may not imagine our constancy shaken." And saying these words, he placed in her hand a letter for St. Francis de Sales.

The following is a copy of that letter, stamped with a father's love, watered with a father's tears, and worded with the vigorous eloquence of a Christian:

"*March* 29, 1610.

"My Lord:

"This paper should be covered with more tears than letters, since my daughter, my chief consolation in this world and my hope for the solace of my miserable old age, is going to leave me childless. But, after your example, my Lord, who at the death of your respected mother were so firm and courageous, I consent and submit to whatever be pleasing to God. Since He wishes to have my daughter for His service in this world and to conduct her by that road to eternal glory, I wish to show Him that I prefer the fulfilment of His will and my own peace of conscience to the gratification of my affections.

"She is, then, going to consecrate herself to God; but it is on the condition that she will not forget her father, who has so dearly and so tenderly loved her.

"She takes with her two pledges, one of whom, Marie-

Aimée, I esteem happy, since she is to enter into your blessed family; as for the other, Françoise, I should be glad if she would keep her for us. With regard to her son, Celse-Bénigne, I shall take the same care of him that a good father owes his children; and as long as it will please God to leave me in this valley of tears and misery, I shall have him reared in honor and virtue."

Provided with this letter, in which the father and the Christian so beautifully speak, Madame de Chantal once more embraced her venerable parent, covered her dear boy, Celse-Bénigne, with her last kisses and tears, and having again most earnestly recommended him to his grandfather and good M. Robert, entered the carriage with her two daughters, her son-in-law, and Mademoiselle de Bréchard, who had resolved to follow her into her retreat. Whilst the carriage was rolling through the streets of Dijon our saint kept silence, but they were no sooner outside the city gates than, seized with holy enthusiasm, she intoned the canticle of deliverance. Her agony was over.

Two hundred and fifty years have passed since that memorable event, but its recital at the present day produces upon the hearer emotions similar to those that witnessed it. Like all great deeds of holiness, it pains and it delights. It excites both amazement and admiration. Such courage shocks at first; but when we see to what prudence and tenderness it is united; when we call to mind by what mature reflection this departure was preceded, and who they were that weighed the matter; when we think of the delicate and minute precautions taken that the children might not suffer from the heroic resolution of the mother; when, afterward, we turn our eyes upon Madame de Chantal, and see her so courageous and yet so crushed—broken-hearted with grief, but hearkening only to the voice of God—stepping over her son's body, though quivering in every fibre and almost swooning; when, above all, we hear that cry bursting from her trembling lips: "What can I do?—I am a mother!"—we are convinced that, in this singular struggle between the two most powerful passions that can agitate the human soul, divine love is the victor without maternal love being vanquished; then all

hesitation ceases, every revolt of nature is appeased, tears start to our eyes, and we admire in silence one of the noblest victories ever gained in this world.

In peace and with deep satisfaction we can now follow Madame de Chantal into the cloister, and see her, even there, constantly occupied with the future of her children, and, in spite of her great labors and numerous undertakings, proving herself, to the last, a true mother. We still see her finishing the education of Françoise, watching over that of Celse-Bénigne, negotiating honorable alliances for both, giving Françoise to the Count de Toulongeon and Marie de Coulanges to Celse-Bénigne. Ah! with what sorrow she closes the eyes of her dear little Baroness de Thorens! And, what is still more beautiful, when Celse-Bénigne shall have fallen on the field of battle, when his young wife shall have followed him in death, when M. de Toulongeon shall have left Françoise a widow, we shall behold the touching sight of our saint, then over sixty years, burdened with the direction of nearly eighty convents and with a correspondence extending over almost all Europe, watching with a mother's eye over the interests of their little orphans!

Such are the scenes this history has in store for us. They are so grand and so beautiful, that after reading the closing chapter of this Life we shall be at a loss which to praise most in Madame de Chantal, the foundress, the wife, or the mother, so admirably did those qualities, maternal and divine, that characterize great souls harmonize in her!

CHAPTER XIII.

FOUNDATION OF THE ORDER OF THE VISITATION.[1]—RECEPTION AND PROFESSION OF MADAME DE CHANTAL AND HER FIRST TWO COMPANIONS, MADEMOISELLE JACQUELINE FAVRE AND MADEMOISELLE JEANNE-CHARLOTTE DE BRÉCHARD.

1610—1611.

On the road from Chambéry to Geneva, at an almost equal distance from each, and on the declivity of one of those hills that form a gradual descent, as if from story to story, from the summits of Saint-Bernard and Mount Blanc, lies the little town of Annecy. No beauty of nature is wanting to the lovely picture of which it forms the centre. A lake laves its foot; silvery streams traverse it in every direction; poplars and plane-trees centuries old shade its avenues; whilst meadows, vineyards, and orchards, interspersed with cottages and country-seats, surround it with a carpet of verdure. In the background, covered half-way up with dense woods, rises a chain of high mountains, which cross and intersect one another toward Switzerland and Savoy, but which, descending with a gentle slope on the side of France, form a magnificent frame for this lovely landscape. And, as if jealous art wished to rival nature in the embellishment of the spot, an old stronghold of mediæval style, flanked with high towers, is proudly perched on a steep rock overlooking the town, mingling reminiscences of war with the peaceful thoughts awakened by the pastoral scene around.

[1] The details of Chapters XIII. and XIV. bear not only the charm of novelty, but the seal of undoubted authority. They have been drawn from two unpublished documents. The first is the history of the foundation of the Convent of the Visitation at Annecy. (*Fondation*

Hither St. Francis de Sales, the exiled Bishop of Geneva, had retired, and here it was that he awaited the Baroness de Chantal, to found with her coöperation the Order of the Visitation.

Madame de Chantal left Dijon March 29, 1610, and reached Annecy on Palm-Sunday, in that year the 4th of April. She travelled slowly and on horseback, as was the custom at that period, accompanied by Marie-Aimée, aged thirteen, Françoise, still younger, and several ladies, her relations or friends. During this long journey of six days, her piety, charity, and modesty were a subject of admiration to all. She was dead to the world and full of her great design to consecrate herself unreservedly to God. On the road, in the villages through which they passed, and wheresoever they stopped over night, she inquired after the poor and sick, visited them, relieved their wants, made their beds, and commended herself to their prayers. When passing through Geneva, she joined to these acts of charity one of touching humility. One of M. de Chantal's near relatives had rendered great services to that city. The year before, the inhabitants had given a kind of ovation to one of our saint's cousins when passing through Geneva. Fearing a similar demonstration, Madame de Chantal, to escape notice, changed

du premier Monastère de la Visitation Sainte-Marie en la Ville d'Annecy, établi le 6 Juin, 1610.) It was composed by Mother de Chaugy, St. Chantal's secretary, perhaps under the saint's dictation; but, at all events, it was revised and corrected by her. (Archives of the Visitation, Annecy, MS. folio.) The other document, preserved in the same archives, is a collection, by a most reliable auricular witness, of the events that marked the beginning of the Order, during the two years and a half the Foundress and her companions occupied the small house called *The Gallery*. Its title runs thus: *Recueil de ce qui s'est passé au commencement de l'Institut, à la petite maison de la Galerie, où nos premières mères ont demeuré deux ans et demi; recueilli par notre tres-honorée sœur Marie-Adrienne Fichet, septième religieuse de notre Ordre, qui en a été témoin auriculaire et irréprochable.* The nuns who wrote this very important manuscript, under the dictation of Mother Fichet herself, sent the substance of it, in the form of a *Circular*, dated 1662, to all the houses of the Order. By comparing these several documents a satisfactory end has been attained, that is, the possibility of presenting the reader with hitherto unpublished details of the first years of the Order of the Visitation.

her title to the Baroness de Bourbilly, rode hastily through the city, and took the road to Annecy.

Notified of her approach, St. Francis de Sales, with a party of lords and ladies, in number twenty-five, rode out to meet her. Crowds of the inhabitants stationed themselves along the streets to welcome her as she entered the city toward evening on Palm-Sunday. M. Favre, President of the Parliament of Savoy, had claimed the honor of receiving her as his guest. She repaired, therefore, to his mansion and, on the very first day, won over to her cause his daughter Marie-Jacqueline. Although longing to give herself to God, Mademoiselle Favre knew not how to realize her design; but the moment she laid eyes on our saint light shone upon her soul. Madame de Chantal, on her side, soon learned to appreciate this young girl, "cherished by God and men for her rare virtues, endowed with an excellent mind, a solid judgment, and a soul pure as snow."[1]

Holy week was employed in visiting the churches, the poor, and the sick, after which Madame de Chantal took Marie-Aimée to Thorens Castle, the future residence of the young bride. There she passed the latter part of April and the first days of May organizing the household of her "little Baroness," as she called her, providing for everything with that great practical judgment we have long recognized in her; and, as the youthful couple were both so very inexperienced, she did not leave them before she had installed in the castle stewards and housekeepers upon whose fidelity and capacity she could rely. These maternal duties fulfilled, assured that Marie-Aimée would want for nothing, she confided Françoise to her for a month or two, and returned to Annecy, to attend to the prosecution of her great affair.

As she was entering the Bishop's house, she noticed two ladies standing in the doorway. One was already advanced in age, the other still very young. They had come to call on St. Francis de Sales. The modest and innocent countenance of the younger attracted our saint's attention. The young lady herself had hardly raised her eyes toward Madame de Chantal before she felt her soul enlightened and

[1] These are St. Chantal's own words, written by her in the book containing the account of the foundation of Annecy.

inflamed with love. "My God!" she whispered to herself, "can it be that Thou art now about to hear me, that at last Thou art going to show me what Thou wishest to do with me?" She concealed her emotion, entered the house, and begged the favor of a private interview with the saintly prelate. She opened to him her heart, told him of her desire to become a religious, of the torturing suspense endured to the present moment, and of the impression made upon her on beholding Madame de Chantal. When the prolonged interview ended, the rising Order numbered one more postulant, Mademoiselle Marie-Péronne de Châtel, to whom the reader has already been introduced.[1]

Nothing more plainly manifests the virtue of the Baroness de Chantal than an action performed by her on the second day after her return to Annecy. By a deed legally drawn up, she transferred all her property, even her dower, to her children, reserving absolutely nothing for herself excepting the ten crowns she had forgotten to take out of her purse.[2] The world severely criticised this action, which, viewed from its standpoint, was rather imprudent; but Divine Providence, who never forsakes those that trust in Him, justified the conduct of the holy Baroness in ways that will surely rouse our admiration.

The Feast of Pentecost was the day fixed by St. Francis de Sales for the commencement of the new establishment. "He wanted," he said, "his spiritual daughters shut up, as it were, in a little Cenacle to receive the Holy Spirit and be inebriated with the celestial wine that makes us speak a new language and live a new life."[3] A contradiction, however, in which the finger of God was later discovered, obliged him to postpone it a few days.

There was at that time in Savoy a wealthy family whom God had inspired with a desire to retire from the world. The father and son wished to enter among the Friars-Minor. The mother was trying to form a new Congregation of

[1] *Les Vies des quatre premières Mères de la Visitation*, vol. i. p. 270.

[2] Process of Canonization: Deposition of Mother Greffier.

[3] De Maupas: *La Vie de la Vénérable Mère Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot*, chap. xix.

women, with whom she purposed leading a hidden and contemplative life. The house was bought and furnished. Several young ladies were preparing to enter, and public opinion applauded the design. St. Francis de Sales was consulted on the subject, and a proposal made to him to unite his efforts with those of this lady. The saint found some difficulty in consenting, but his meek and condescending spirit ultimately led him to enter into the new project.

As Pentecost approached, he wrote to the lady, of whom he had for some time heard nothing. He reminded her that being on the eve of accomplishing a great undertaking, she ought to test herself and examine whether she had sufficient zeal, courage, and strength to embrace Jesus Crucified and bid a last adieu to the world; but, if she felt any hesitation in the matter, she should notify him, that the others might proceed without delay to fulfil their unshaken resolution.[1]

This letter threw the pious lady into deep trouble. That Jesus Crucified whom, as St. Francis de Sales said, she would have to embrace, frightened her, and she commenced seriously to doubt her vocation. A sickness, by which she was at that very time attacked, led her to believe that she ought not to be a religious, and she wrote to the saint no longer to look upon her as a participator in his design.

St. Francis de Sales felt this disappointment the more keenly, as he had counted upon the house prepared by this lady; and as Madame de Chantal had made over her entire fortune to her children, they had no money to buy and furnish another. But neither the Founder nor the Foundress was discouraged by this unforeseen event. It only gave them a better chance, they said, to commence in poverty. St. Francis de Sales immediately turned his attention to a small, unpretentious looking house in the suburb Perrière, almost on the margin of the lake. It had a yard on one side and an orchard on the other. The latter, it is true, was separated from the house by a road; but this inconvenience was remedied by a covered gallery thrown like a bridge over the road, thus connecting the lots. He decided at once upon purchasing the property. He paid part down and gave

[1] Letter of May 2, 1610.

security for the rest. Never had he appeared happier than upon the day he signed the contract. "I was never happier than now that I have found a hive for my poor bees, or rather, a cage for my little doves."[1]

It was evident that God Himself had directed all; for the foundation, which was to have commenced on the Feast of Pentecost, had to be delayed until Trinity Sunday, which fell that year on the Feast of St. Claude, a circumstance wholly unpremeditated. They could not but remark with astonishment this second fulfilment of the words Madame de Chantal had heard in her vision: "Courage, my daughter, you will enter into the sacred rest of the children of God by the gate of St. Claude."

A prodigy removed the last doubt as to the hidden Hand that was directing St. Francis de Sales. In the course of the week following the Feast of Pentecost, the holy Bishop was walking alone in his room, saying his Rosary, as was his custom. Suddenly two pillars of fire appeared by him, one on either side. Absorbed in meditation, he continued walking, the mysterious pillars accompanying him for some time, like an escort, as he himself humbly and simply related to M. Michel Favre, his confessor, who attested the same on oath. "It seems," add the *Mémoires*, "that Almighty God sent those pillars and heavenly lights to this great Moses, to comfort him at the departure of his poor little people from the Egypt of this world; for, if it is said of the children of Israel that they were the least among nations, so, too, are we the least among the Orders of the Church of God."[2]

June 5, 1610, the eve of the day upon which the enterprise was to begin, was employed in making final preparations. Mademoiselle Marie-Jacqueline Favre and Mademoiselle de Bréchard had decided to join Madame de Chantal at once. They had hoped that Marie-Péronne de Châtel, who had come to Annecy on the eve of Pentecost, would do the same; but she was obliged to return home to obtain her

[1] *Fondation inédite du Monastère d'Annecy*, p. 5.

[2] *Fondation inédite du Monastère d'Annecy*, p. 6. We shall always quote the copy of the convent of Dijon.

parents' consent. The good Anne-Jacqueline Coste was to be their portress and servant, until St. Francis should fix a place for her in the future constitution of his Congregation. All things being arranged, the house supplied with some pieces of furniture, and the chapel draped in white and adorned with flowers, Madame de Chantal, who had spent the whole day in making preparations, was the last to retire for the night. It was not long, however, before she was assailed by a terrible temptation. She seemed to behold her father and father-in-law, bent under the weight of sorrow and old age, crying for vengeance against her; and, more distressing still, her little children in tears stretching out their arms to her. Had she not committed a crime in abandoning them? Would she not be looked upon in the Church, nay, would she not be condemned even by Holy Scripture, as a faithless mother for having thus forsaken her children? She had certainly deceived the Bishop, consequently, the advice he had given her to quit her relatives was contrary to the will of God; and, if that were so, ought she not to withdraw at once from the undertaking? Then there passed through her mind "a number of fine expedients, by which she might do so honorably." This martyrdom lasted at least two hours. In vain did she appeal to her faith; in vain did she try to recall the slow and prudent manner in which the whole affair had been conducted. The temptation increased until, at last, exhausted by the struggle, she fell on her knees and exclaimed: "My God, I abandon myself to Thy providence! Let my parents, my children, and myself perish, if Thou hast so ordained: I care not. My only desire, in time and eternity, is to obey Thee and serve Thy Divine Majesty." These energetic words, pronounced with lively faith, restored her peace. The clouds disappeared, and, as always happens after temptations resisted, a sweet feeling of joy filled her heart and inundated it until morning.[1]

On the 6th, Madame de Chantal and her two companions assisted at the Bishop's Mass and received Holy Communion from his hand. The rest of the day was employed in visit-

[1] *Fondation inédite d'Annecy*, p. 7.

ing the churches and the poor. In the evening, about sunset, they repaired to the episcopal residence, where St. Francis de Sales had invited them to sup with his brothers. A large number of persons had assembled there to bid them good-bye. After supper, the Bishop withdrew into his study, with Madame de Chantal, Mademoiselle Marie-Jacqueline Favre, and Mademoiselle Charlotte de Bréchard. He could not restrain his emotion at the sight of these chaste spouses of Jesus Christ, "who were even then inhaling the sweet air of solitude, and burning with the desire to leave all for God." With words befitting the holiness of his beautiful soul and the eminent virtues of his hearers, he encouraged them to accomplish their sacrifice. Then he placed in St. Chantal's hands a rough sketch of the Constitutions they were to follow, and, raising his eyes toward heaven, blessed them in the name of the Father who had drawn them, of the Son who was guiding them, and of the Holy Ghost who was inflaming them with divine love.[1]

They had tried to keep secret the hour at which they were to retire into their solitude; but from early morning the people had been on the watch, and the streets were soon almost impassable. The air resounded with kind wishes. The pious Foundresses advanced slowly, escorted by the three brothers of St. Francis de Sales, and accompanied by the nobility, the magistrates, and the common people. No one could gaze unmoved upon that pacific triumph of humility and charity. When about to enter the "Gallery House," Anne-Jacqueline Coste came out to meet them, cast herself at their feet, and promised on her knees to serve them faithfully. The house was full of ladies, most of them friends or relatives, all anxious for a last embrace.

The approach of night obliged the visitors to withdraw, and the three fervent novices were left alone with God, their soul filled with peace. "Behold," said the saint, "the place of our delight! Here, at last, we find the rest of the children of God, not only through the gate of St. Claude, but on the Feast of St. Claude itself." All knelt down to thank

[1] *Recueil* by Sister Fichet of what took place at the foundation of the Institute at the "Little Gallery House."

the Divine Pilot who had guided them into port after so many storms. Then they read the regulations given them by St. Francis de Sales, and, embracing, pledged to one another lasting and faithful affection. Mademoiselle Favre and Mademoiselle de Bréchard promised Madame de Chantal filial obedience, and all embraced the good Anne-Jacqueline Coste, who had been chosen by God as the first Out-Sister of the new Order.

It was now late, and they retired to their poor cells, joyfully and forever to lay aside their worldly attire. Mademoiselle de Bréchard, the most impetuous of all, "took off her *maule* and *houppe*, certain articles of dress then worn by young ladies," and trampled them under foot. They frequently remarked in after years that never had they slept so sweetly and calmly as on that first night of their retreat.

Madame de Chantal alone could not sleep. Her emotion was too deep. All night her heart poured itself out in loving adoration of the wonderful ways by which God had so mercifully favored the enterprise. For one moment, however, her peace was troubled. At daybreak a doubt passed through her mind. "Was not the enterprise in which she had engaged a rash one? Was it not tempting God to burden herself with the direction of a community? Where get food and clothing for her Sisters? Would not God, whose ways are full of wisdom and prudence, abandon her as foolish for not having filled her lamp with oil?"[1]

Madame de Chantal's impressions were always of the liveliest kind. They lasted for almost two hours on this occasion, but fervent faith supported her. "What! my God," she said, "I am afraid? What can I fear? Thy kind foresight extends to the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. Canst Thou, then, refuse it to Thy humble servants? It is enough for us to seek Thy kingdom and its justice. All the rest will be added unto us." The hour having come, she rose promptly and went, with a joyful heart, to awake her two dear spiritual children, "whom the change of bed had not prevented from sleeping." They dressed in their novitiate costume, which consisted of a plain

[1] *Fondation inédite d'Annecy*, p. 9.

black robe, a small white linen collar, a black bandeau covering half the forehead and entirely hiding the hair, and a large hood of black taffety, without a point or any pretension to fashion. This hood, when lowered, covered the whole face. "Never," say the old *Mémoires*, after having described this humble costume, "did the proud queens of Egypt more willingly array themselves in their splendid apparel than these humble servants of Our Saviour clothed themselves in their simple new dress."[1]

About eight o'clock St. Francis de Sales came to say Mass and give Holy Communion to his dear daughters. He deferred till the afternoon a longer visit to them, as the house had been literally invaded by the crowd that followed him. When he returned that evening he established inclosure for the first year and made them drop the titles of Madame and Mademoiselle, which were too pompous for souls that had renounced everything, and too cold to express the tender affection with which they were henceforth to regard one another. For them they substituted the sweet words Mother and Sister. He also approved their costume, but he could not repress a smile at sight of their ungraceful head-dress. "Really," he laughingly remarked to his brothers, on his return home, "our ladies have not adopted a head-dress very becoming to them."

Meanwhile the good Sister Anne-Jacqueline Coste was casting around for means to provide the first dinner. There were no provisions in the house, and no money to buy any. She had gone early in the morning to Mother de Chantal (as we shall hereafter call her) to inform her of her embarrassment, but the only answer she received was a smile and "My good child, God will provide." This satisfied Anne-Jacqueline, and she waited calmly. But ten o'clock having passed and no provisions having arrived, she went into the garden, gathered some vegetables, borrowed a porringer of milk from a neighbor, and boiled the whole together. This

[1] *Fondation inédite d'Annecy*, p. 10. There is still to be seen at Annecy, in the little "Gallery House," a small painting on wood, representing the first three mothers in this costume, which was afterward abandoned.

was to be the banquet, the first feast of the new recluses. But they had scarcely seated themselves at table when a knock at the door was heard. Anne-Jacqueline hastened to answer the call, and behold! there stood one of President Favre's servants with bread, wine, and meat. This charitable offering, arriving at such a time, filled the Sisters with joy. Anne-Jacqueline felt a little remorse, also, for not having sufficiently confided in Divine Providence.

Next day, June 8th, St. Francis de Sales, "having again returned to see his little doves, thought it well to consider to what tune they should pour out their warbling and divine praise."[1] They tried some of the chants used by other female Orders, but St. Francis de Sales did not think them simple enough. At last he took the notes himself and, assisted by Mother de Chantal, composed the chant now used by the Sisters of the Visitation. It is simple and grave, almost all on one note, with a few easy inflections scattered here and there. There is nothing in it to gratify vanity or to distract the mind from its occupation with God. Mother de Chantal and her two daughters began at once to study the Little Office of Our Lady. They found some difficulty in the pronunciation of the Latin, Mother de Chantal particularly, who was no longer young, and who was, moreover, more habituated to the pronunciation of the heart than to that of the lips. Such, however, was her respect for the sacred psalmody that she sometimes passed several hours of the night repeating the words and verses in which she had been told she made mistakes. St. Francis de Sales' brother, M. de Boisy, who succeeded him in the see of Geneva, often went to listen to the chant for the purpose of correcting faults, particularly in accent, and he taught them the ceremonies of the Office with such care and exactitude as could spring only from his own great love for God.

On July 2, 1610, Feast of the Visitation, the Sisters sang the Office of the Blessed Virgin for the first time at Vespers. St. Chantal presided. Mother Favre was grand chantress and chorister of her choir, and Mother de Bréchard chorister of hers. As they were only three in number, they had in-

[1] *Fondation inédite d'Annecy*, p. 12.

vited Mademoiselle de la Roche, the daughter of the Governor of Annecy, to assist them with her beautiful voice. That young lady was then a zealous votary of the world, but she was soon to become through God's grace one of the pillars of the rising Order. St. Francis de Sales assisted at the whole of Vespers, kneeling before the sanctuary rail, his eyes moist with tears, and his heart inundated with consolation.

Their poverty continued. The first night they spent in their new home they had neither bread, wine, lights, oil, nor provisions of any kind, "which greatly astonished a certain pious person, because, if anything had happened during the night, they had not even a candle end to light."[1] Six months later, they were no better off. "I remember," says Mother de Chantal, "that once our good Out-Sister had bought three sous' worth of charcoal. We all three went with our keys, as the Rule prescribes, to open the money-box. We found in it only the three sous we wanted; and, indeed, we were glad to get them."[2] A small cask of wine had been given them in alms. They drew from it from the 6th of June, 1610, until the vintage of 1611, when they bought some. No sooner had they provided for themselves than the little cask suddenly failed, to Mother de Chantal's great astonishment. She declared that, if they had not thought of laying in a store of wine, the little cask would never have been exhausted.

Their fervor was still greater than their poverty. The following picture of those heroic times drawn by Mother de Chantal tempts us to believe that we are reading a page from the history of the Catacombs. "It is impossible," she says, "to relate all the graces and heavenly favors lavished by God upon those dear souls. There shone in that Community fervor, exactitude, obedience, remarkable recollection, the spirit of prayer, childlike candor, innocence, meek and holy joy in conversation, and so great a love of union that to be among them was, in my opinion, a paradise of delights. They spoke but of God and the means to ad-

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, part ii. chap. ii.

[2] *Mémoires inédite* of Mother de Chantal.—*Fondation manuscrite d'Annecy.* (Archives of Annecy.)

vance in His holy love." "We made the least observances a matter of conscience," she says again. "One day two of our dear Sisters, walking in the orchard, found some pears lying under a pear-tree. Wishing to know whether the fruit was ready for gathering, each took a bite without, however, swallowing it. But they soon scrupled it, and told our Blessed Father about it. He made them confess it and tell it to the Superioress, and not only that, but every other fault they might commit against observance, however trifling it might appear to them. That great saint inspired us with so zealous a love for the greatest exactitude and simplicity, that we felt remorse for the least fault. We could get no peace until we went to cast ourselves at the feet of the Superioress and humbly accuse ourselves of it." The saint adds: "We three and the good Out-Sister lived six weeks so happily and peaceably together, that our beloved Sister Jacqueline Favre used to say that, were it not for the glory of God, she would have wished us to pass our whole life in that way, without increasing our number."

But that was not possible. The perfume of virtue exhaled by the rising Order was too sweet not to attract soon to Annecy a crowd of souls anxious to be trained to virtue under the direction of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal. On July 22, 1610, six weeks after their establishment, the Community received Claude-Françoise Roget, a young girl of Annecy, "very amiable, very virtuous, and very much beloved, who took the habit with childlike joy, but whom God did but show to the Congregation, for she died shortly after with still greater joy," "the first of my daughters," said St. Francis de Sales, "who has gone to see in heaven what God is preparing for the others."

Four days later, July 26th, came Mademoiselle Marie-Péronne de Châtel, whom our readers already know, and who was to leave to the Order so lively a remembrance of innocence, generosity, and holy gaiety in the service of God. About eleven months before, she had made a pilgrimage to the celebrated shrine of Notre-Dame des Ermites, Switzerland. Tired of the world, longing for peace and solitude, not knowing where to find them, although she had shed many tears, prayed, and given alms to obtain this knowl-

edge, she felt inspired to force from the Blessed Virgin what had hitherto been refused her. She took from her finger a valuable ring, very dear to her as being the gift of her mother, and gave it to the Blessed Virgin, saying with her usual simplicity: "O holy Virgin, it is customary for lovers to give rings to those whom they love, and husbands give them to their wives during the marriage ceremony. Since thy dear Son, whom I have chosen for my lover, does not do me the honor of offering me one, I give thee this to present to Him in my name. I know that well-bred girls ought to receive a ring only in the presence of their mother, and that thy Son will accept one only from thy hand. It is for this reason that I present it to thee. O Mother, I want to be the spouse of thy Son, and, to show my eagerness, I myself offer the ring for my betrothal to Him. I now present Him with the engagement-ring, and I hope that He will give me the wedding-ring on the day of my profession. I entreat thee, O my Mother, not to keep me in misery any longer, but grant my petition in a year at the latest." The Blessed Virgin heard her prayer; for the year was not yet up when, on July 26th, she received the veil of the spouses of Christ from the hand of St. Chantal.

Two days after she was followed by Mademoiselle Marie-Marguerite Milletot, daughter of a councillor of the Burgundian Parliament, and a little later by Marie-Adrienne Fichet, belonging to one of the first families of Savoy. Marie-Adrienne had been baptized and almost reared by St. Francis de Sales. She received the habit in Mother de Chantal's room kneeling near the hearth. Our saint, who was sick, and who had been forbidden by her physicians to go down to the chapel, was seated near the fire.

Mademoiselle Claude-Marie Thioller, of Chambéry, presented herself the following month, and was the eighth received into the Order.

The ninth was Mademoiselle de la Roche, daughter of the Governor of Annecy. Although in August, 1610, her vocation was considered genuine, she had to wait a whole year before taking the habit. She was eighteen years old, still quite worldly, though less so than in former years, "very beautiful, of a fine figure, very graceful, full of wit and talent, of

a very gay disposition," and bound by the closest ties of friendship to Marie-Jacqueline Favre. When the latter was converted in the ball-room, as we have related, Mademoiselle de la Roche, who had not received the same light, began to ridicule her friend and banter her about giving up the world and devoting herself to the service of God. When Marie-Jacqueline would close her eyes in church and clasp her hands, in order to pray more devoutly, Mademoiselle de la Roche would mimic her. But the gay young jester was caught in her own net. By accompanying Marie-Jacqueline to church so often she contracted a taste for prayer, though without the slightest thought of ever entering the convent. If she sometimes went there, it was through affection for Sister Favre and veneration for Mother de Chantal, and because they sent for her on solemn feasts, to support their small choir with her beautiful voice. Brought thus in daily communication with St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal, and constantly witnessing the wonders wrought by God in the first days of the Visitation, she had by degrees the revelation of a world far more beautiful than the one she had hitherto known, and, at the age of nineteen, she tore herself from her family and went to ask of the holy Founders of the new Order the humble veil of the spouses of Jesus Christ.

On reaching the Bishop's residence, June 28, 1611, she found there Mademoiselle Marie-Aimée de Blonay, of whose happy childhood we have already spoken. She, too, had come to offer herself to God. Both beautiful and pure as angels, they understood each other without uttering a word, and, falling into each other's arms, they embraced with testimonies of holy friendship. St. Francis de Sales, observing them, quietly directed the attention of Marie-Aimée's father to them, saying: "See, my dear brother, how our two poor little doves are caressing each other! I hope God will receive them as an agreeable offering, and that He will make them both abundantly fruitful in the little dove-cote in which we are going to shut them up."[1] Mademoiselle de la Roche was nineteen, Mademoiselle de Blonay, eighteen.

[1] *Vie de la Mère de Blonay*, by Charles-Auguste de Sales, chap. v.

Both proved, in reality, two of the most innocent doves and firmest supports of the rising Order.

Meanwhile St. Francis de Sales, though giving the habit to so many novices, was still ignorant of what he should do with them, what should be their title, what their life-work. We even see by his letters that he was preparing an Institute very different from that finally established. Only a few years had passed since St. Teresa had soared to heights of most sublime perfection, and drawn after her thousands of followers. The solitudes of Carmel, more worthy of admiration, perhaps, than those of the old Thebaid, were crowded with young girls who slept upon hard beds, fasted one half of the year, drank nothing but water, imposed upon themselves bloody disciplines, and made of their body the altar upon which they immolated their will. The Dominicanesses, the Poor Clares, and the Ursulines presented the same characteristics; consequently, wandering from door to door of those convents might be seen numbers of very pious and very generous women, capable of the most heroic sacrifices, but of delicate health, frail and sickly constitution, sighing after the religious life, but unable to stand its austerity, and forced by their corporal weakness to remain in the midst of a world that they detested. This gave evidence of a first deficiency in the general organization of the religious life.

But there was a second. All these religious lived hidden from the world, behind impenetrable grates, occupied with prayer and meditation. They never left their convents to seek the dwellings of the poor, to nurse the sick, to assist the dying, to unite the fruitful life of prayer with the no less fruitful life of charity so necessary at that period. It was this twofold deficiency that St. Francis de Sales hoped to supply. "Respected and very dear brother," he wrote to a priest, "you want to know what I am doing in this nook of our mountains, the odor of which, you say, has reached even you. I can easily believe it, my dear brother; for, since I have placed holocausts on the altar of God, does it not necessarily follow that they should emit an odor of sweetness? This, then, is not what I have done, but what God has done during the past summer:

"My brother de Thorens went to Burgundy for his little wife, and brought back with her a mother-in-law whom he never deserved to have nor I to serve. You already know how God made her my daughter. You must know, then, that this daughter has come to her miserable father, that he may make her die to the world. Longing for God, she has left all; and, with prudence and fortitude rare in her weak sex, she provided for her departure in a manner in which the good will find much to praise, and the malicious children of the world no room for slander.

"On Trinity Sunday we shut her up with two companions and the servant-girl whom I pointed out to you, and who, in the rusticity of her birth, is so good a soul that in her rank I have never seen her equal. They have since been joined by young ladies from Chambéry, Grenoble, and Burgundy. I hope that this Congregation will be a sweet and agreeable refuge for the infirm, for without many corporal austerities they practise all the essential virtues of devotion.

"They say the Office of Our Lady and make mental prayer. They have labor, silence, obedience, humility, and strict poverty; and as much as in any monastery in the whole world, their life is amorous, interior, peaceful, and very edifying. After their profession, they will, with God's help, go out to nurse the sick with great humility. This, my dearest brother, is a little summary of what is going on here."[1]

To another he wrote: "In the beginning, inclosure will be observed thus: No man will be permitted to enter into the inclosure excepting on such occasions as they are allowed to enter into the reformed monasteries. Neither will women be permitted to enter without the leave of the Superior, that is, of the Bishop or the one appointed by him.

"As for the Sisters, after their year of novitiate, they will go out only to nurse the sick, on which occasions their dress will not be different from that worn by ladies in the world, except that it will be black and extremely humble and modest.

"They will sing the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin as

[1] Letter of April 3, 1611.

a holy and heavenly recreation. The rest of their time will be spent in all kinds of good works, particularly in holy and devout prayer. I hope Our Lord will be glorified in this design, for the foundation-stone He has given us is a soul of eminent virtue." [1]

We here see, in its first form, what St. Francis de Sales had conceived to supply the twofold deficiency mentioned above. His plan was to have a little Congregation of religious women, bound more by charity than by vows, supplying for corporal mortifications, of which they had few, by all kinds of pious exercises, particularly by prayer, obedience, and interior sacrifice; in which, consequently, all well-disposed persons would be received, without regard to age, weak health, or even sickness itself. To protect his little Congregation from anything like dissipation, he proposed a semi-cloister, which would prevent seculars from entering the convent, whilst allowing the Sisters to go out. He even wished them to go out, in order to visit the poor, nurse the sick, instruct the ignorant, and, in a word, fulfil a ministry of charity in the midst of the world.

Such was his plan. But it was not given to St. Francis de Sales to execute the latter part of his design. It was not he who had received from God the mission to supply the second deficiency, and, after having transformed nuns into mothers of the poor, to lead them from their cloisters and expose them to the astonished gaze of the world. The Sisters of Charity, conceived by the Bishop of Geneva, was a creation reserved for St. Vincent de Paul.

The mission of St. Francis de Sales was of a different, though not less beautiful, character. But he was ignorant of it at the time; and one of the most interesting features of this history is to behold God gradually enlightening his mind, directing his actions, and leading him to modify his plans. "I do not know why they call me Founder of an Order," he once said pleasantly; "for I have not done what I wanted to do, and I have done what I did not want to do."

Since his daughters were to be employed in works of

[1] Letter of May 24, 1610.

mercy, St. Francis de Sales determined to place them under the patronage of St. Martha, the hostess of Our Lord and the model of all who serve Him in the poor. He spoke of it to Mother de Chantal, who felt a secret repugnance, for she wished her daughters to be dedicated entirely and solely to the Blessed Virgin. But she said nothing, merely praying God earnestly to enlighten her holy director. Imagine her joy when, a few days after, the saintly Bishop came to tell her that God had made him change his mind, that the Congregation should be dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, and that the Sisters should be called the Sisters of the Visitation. He had chosen this mystery, he said, that, whilst visiting the poor, they might imitate the zeal, holy generosity, and sublime supernatural motives of Our Lady, when, resisting her inclination for solitude, she left her quiet home and crossed the hills of Judea, her heart burning with charity, to communicate to her cousin Elizabeth the great secret and the great joy of her soul.

Amid these various occupations, the year of novitiate passed. June 6th, the Feast of St. Claude, the first anniversary of the opening of the house and the taking of the habit, was approaching, and St. Francis de Sales decided that it should, also, be the profession day of his new religious. After having satisfied himself of the dispositions of the three novices and of their earnest desire to consecrate themselves to God, he reminded them that what they offer to Him ought to be purified in the fire of love, and encouraged them to redoubled fervor in order to prepare for the great solemnity. St. Chantal, most of all, was impatiently awaiting the moment in which to consummate the holocaust.

"Oh, when will that happy day come," she wrote, "upon which I shall make the irrevocable offering of myself to my God? His goodness has filled me with a feeling so strong and so extraordinary of the privilege of being all His, that, if it lasts in its present intensity, it will consume me. Never before have I felt so ardent love and desire for evangelical perfection. It is impossible for me to express either what I feel, or the greatness of the perfection to which God is calling me. Alas! the more I resolve to be very faithful

in my love for this sweet Saviour, the more impossible it appears to make a suitable return for the greatness of His love. Oh! how painful in love is the barrier of our impotence!" [1]

In the midst of her seraphic fervor, however, Mother de Chantal had in her heart an ever-bleeding wound, which suddenly reopened at the thought of her approaching profession. It was the remembrance of her dear children, above all of Celse-Bénigne, from whom she was separated. Françoise, at least, was with her, and Marie-Aimée was only two or three leagues away, and came every week to Annecy. Both would be near her at the moment of her profession, and their presence would temper the sacrifice. But it was a year since she had embraced Celse-Bénigne, and when would she see him again? This thought awakened all the sorrow she had felt when stepping over the body of her boy. "Ah! my dear child," wrote St. Francis de Sales to her, "I commend to you our poor heart. Relieve it, comfort it. It is the lamb, the holocaust, that we must offer to God." "This day twelve years ago," he again wrote, "I had the happiness of celebrating Mass in the convent of the holy Roman widow, with a thousand desires to be devout to her all my life. As she is our holy patroness, she must be our model. She certainly loved her little Baptiste as much as you love your Celse-Bénigne; but she left to God the entire disposal of him according to His will, and He made of him a child of benediction, as He will do, I hope, with the dearest child of my very dear mother." [2]

Not satisfied with preparing the hearts of the novices, St. Francis de Sales busied himself, also, with the details of the ceremony of profession. The first question was that of the symbolical veil which the Church has always placed upon the head of those who consecrate themselves to God. Mother de Chantal wished, at first, that the Sisters should wear a small white veil under the black one, but St. Francis de Sales was not of the same opinion.[3] She then proposed veils of

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 131.

[2] Letter of March 9, 1611.

[3] *Procès de Béatification: Mémoires inédites de la Mère de la Croix*, vol. ii. p. 527.

black crape, thinking that they could be made of no other material; but the saintly Founder, in his deep humility, replied: "That is too fine and too rich for you who profess so great simplicity and poverty. They must be made of tammy." This was soon done out of a robe worn by Mother de Chantal in the world, as they had no new stuff for the purpose. The next question was its size and shape. St. Chantal arranged it in several different ways on Sister de Bréchard. St. Francis de Sales, who was present, chose the style he thought most suitable, and, taking the scissors, he rounded it in the back just as it is worn at present.[1]

The shape of the veil being determined, the Sisters began to ornament the altar before which their sacrifice was to be consummated. President Favre had promised to send his daughter twenty crowns for that purpose; but the money was not yet forthcoming. To supply the need, Sisters Favre and De Bréchard proposed to use the four or five gold pieces lately given them by St. Francis de Sales, with the injunction, however, to make use of them only for the sick. They persuaded Mother de Chantal that it would not be failing in obedience to take the money for the altar, since it would be replaced as soon as President Favre's promised sum arrived. Our saint yielded to their wishes, but scarcely had she given the permission than she repented, and immediately wrote a note to St. Francis de Sales, humbly accusing herself of her fault. The Bishop, who knew nothing of the arguments brought to bear upon Mother de Chantal, was deeply wounded by her act of disobedience. He went early next morning to the convent to testify to her his displeasure. As soon as the saint saw him, she ran to cast herself at his feet, shedding tears and again accusing herself of what she had done. "My child," said the Bishop, with a grave countenance, "this is your first act of disobedience. I have passed a bad night on account of it." He said not another word, but allowed her to remain kneeling and in tears, for the

[1] It is St. Chantal who gives us these charming scenes, in which she so carefully hides her own part, to give prominence to her Blessed Father. (See the manuscript *Mémoires* of Mother de Chantal. See, also, *L'Histoire de la Fondation d'Annecy, et la Relation de ce qui s'est passé en la petite Maison de la Galerie.*)

space of a *Miserere*. The spot in the orchard where this touching scene of humility and repentance took place is still shown.

The decoration of the altar bespoke the poverty of the Sisters. Their tapestry consisted of sheets trimmed with sprays of wild flowers. The effect produced was so beautiful and the chapel was filled with so sweet a perfume that, on entering it, says an eye-witness, "one felt as if entering into the garden of the Spouse, amid the flowers of the field and the lilies of the valley."

On June 6, 1611, the day appointed for the profession, St. Francis de Sales went early in the morning to hear their confession and to incite them, with his heavenly words, to make their sacrifice worthily.[1] His face glowed. His lovely countenance beamed with joy, mingled with majestic gravity quite extraordinary. It was after this confession that St. Chantal renewed in a more special manner the vow of obedience she had already made to him, and begged Almighty God to guide and direct her by the intervention of that great saint, whom she called the father of her soul. She asked, also, for the grace of a perfect love for obedience. To obtain this favor, she invoked several saints, particularly the holy patriarch Abraham, to whom she had particular devotion ever since the day upon which, after his example, she had had the courage to sacrifice her own son.[2]

[1] Mother de Chaugy says in her *Mémoires* (p. 132) that St. Francis de Sales went to hear their confession on the evening of June 5th. In her *Fondation* of Annecy, she says that it was on the morning of the 6th. Such little contradictions frequently occur in her *Mémoires, Vies des premières Mères*, and in her manuscript *Fondations*. She attached no importance to such discrepancies; therefore, we shall no longer notice them, but follow the opinion that appears most probable.

[2] The following formula of her vow was found among St. Francis de Sales' papers: "My God, I renew and again ratify my vow of perpetual chastity, as well as that of obedience to Thy Divine Majesty, through the person of My Lord, Francis de Sales, Thy beloved and most worthy Bishop of Geneva, my only master and dearest father in this world. My God, my Saviour, I abandon myself irrevocably and without reserve to Thy divine will and holy providence. Govern me and employ me in whatever may be pleasing to Thee, through the instrumentality of this great father of my soul, whom Thou hast given me, and grant me the grace of perfect love for obedience."

After the Gospel, the Bishop, clothed in his pontifical robes, ascended the pulpit. The three novices, seated on the floor of the sanctuary, attracted all eyes by the modesty and humility of their countenance radiant with love. St. Francis de Sales compared them to three grains of wheat cast upon ground hitherto sterile, but which multiplied in such abundance that the country became rich in a few years. "And thus," he added in a prophetic spirit, "thus shall we see these three humble souls, whom the providence of God has sown in this little corner of the earth, multiply without number, and the Divine Mercy will bless them with great prosperity and be glorified in them."

When the sermon was over, the three Sisters knelt upon the altar-step, and the ceremony of the profession began by the singing of the *Veni Creator.*

In all Religious Orders, these ceremonies are as touching as the act they accompany. We assist in turn at a death and at a birth. On one side, we find mournful chanting, a pall, blessed candles, and a bell tolling as if for a funeral; on the other, we are greeted by radiant faces, flowery wreaths, songs of joy. Here combine the sorrows of the tomb with the joys of the crib. St. Francis de Sales, in conforming to these ancient rites, modified them according to circumstances. His gentle spirit is everywhere prominent in these prayers that he himself composed. His heart speaks in them.

After the *Veni Creator* had been sung, and the Bishop had prayed a short time, his hands extended, St. Chantal, in a voice grave and composed, though trembling with love and emotion, commenced thus the Act of profession:

"O heavens, hear ye what I say, and let the earth listen to the words of my mouth! To Thee, my Saviour, Jesus Christ, my heart speaketh, although I am but dust and ashes. O my God, I vow to Thee to live in perpetual chastity, obedience, and poverty.[1] I offer and consecrate to

[1] Later, after the approbation of the Order of the Visitation, the following words were here introduced into the formula: "*According to the Rule of St. Augustine and the Constitutions of the Order of the Visitation of Our Lady, for the observance of which I offer,*" etc.

Thy Divine Majesty and to the sacred Virgin Mary, Thy Mother, Our Lady, my person and my life. Receive me, O eternal and tenderly compassionate Father, into Thy paternal arms, that I may always bear the yoke and burden of Thy holy service, and that I may forever abandon myself without reserve to Thy divine love, to which I again dedicate and consecrate my being. O most glorious, most sacred, most sweet Virgin Mary, I beseech thee, for the love and through the death of thy Son, to receive me into the bosom of thy maternal protection. I choose Jesus, my Lord and my God, for the only object of my love. I choose His holy and sacred Mother for my protection, and the Congregation here established for my perpetual direction. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. Amen."

The other Sisters repeated these beautiful words, after which all three knelt before St. Francis de Sales, who put around the neck of each a small silver cross and, unfolding the veils, placed them on their head, saying: "This veil shall shade you from the eyes of men and be a sacred sign that Jesus Christ is the only object of your love."

They then prostrated, face downward, the attendants covered them with a pall, the mournful words of Job were read over them: "Man born of woman living for a short time," etc.; and, whilst the assistants recited the *De profundis*, St. Francis de Sales sprinkled the prostrate Sisters with holy water, as is done over the coffin at burials.

Admirable religion that gives souls the strength to anticipate their tomb, to bury themselves alive under the pall of death, and that calls them from the grave to the honor and fecundity of a new life!

The Sisters having risen, joyous hymns succeeded the mournful strain, St. Francis de Sales placed a Crucifix in their hands, and St. Chantal said aloud: "My Beloved is all mine, and I am all His. Never will I abandon Him to cast my eyes upon men, for I am closely united to Him by charity, and His goodness surpasses all earthly love. O my God, turn away my eyes from vanity, and let not injustice prevail against me!"

Next a lighted candle was given her, and she said: "O Lord, Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Thy light hath shone upon me, and Thou hast given joy to my heart."

The ceremony ended by St. Francis de Sales saying to them: "Go, my children, return to your abode, for the Lord has greatly favored you." They accordingly withdrew into their choir, which was separated from the sanctuary by a railing. On entering, Mother de Chantal, by a sudden inspiration, exclaimed: *Hæc requies mea in sæculum sæculi: hic habitabo, quoniam elegi eam.* "This is my rest forever and ever: here will I dwell, for I have chosen it," which words were afterward added to the ceremony of profession. The venerable assembly that filled the chapel could not restrain their emotion; their tears watered the sacrifice of the holy victims. Some of the most distinguished remained after the ceremony to salute the new religious; but the Bishop desired that it should be done in only a few words. "Leave them," he said, "the whole day in peace, to taste the gift of God."

Four days after, June 10, 1611, St. Francis de Sales wrote the following little note to St. Chantal:

"Good-morning, my very dear Mother. Last night God gave me the thought that our house of the Visitation is, through His grace, great and noble enough to have its escutcheons, its coat of arms, its device, and its motto. I think, then, my dear Mother, if you approve, that we will take for our arms a heart pierced with two arrows, encircled by a crown of thorns, the poor heart surmounted by a cross graven with the sacred names of Jesus and Mary. My child, the first time I see you, I shall tell you a thousand little thoughts that have come to me on this subject; for, in truth, our little Congregation is a work of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The Saviour dying has brought us forth by the opening of His Sacred Heart." [1]

What were those "thousand little thoughts" that St. Francis de Sales had had during the night, and that he wished to confide to Mother de Chantal? When, on June 10, 1610, almost a century before Our Lord's apparition to

[1] Unpublished letter of June 10, 1611.

Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, St. Francis de Sales gave for arms to his rising Institute a heart crowned with thorns and surmounted by a cross, was he not yielding to a sublime presentiment? Had God, during that blessed night, of which we possess so little information, favored him with the revelation of the great event, which a century later was to cast so sweet a light upon the Order of the Visitation? Or when He decreed to give to a world full of hatred and soon to be full of ruins the sweet devotion of the Sacred Heart as a consolation and a hope, did He choose the Visitation for its propagation only to recompense it for having, at its birth, taken for its arms that Heart crowned with thorns, thus giving the signal, as it were, for this beautiful devotion?

CHAPTER XIV.

"THE LITTLE GALLERY-HOUSE."

1611—1612.

So far St. Francis de Sales had been engaged in preparing his first three spiritual daughters for the religious life. Now that they had taken their vows it was necessary to organize the Institute, to decide definitively upon its end, and to draw up its Rules and Constitutions. The year just elapsed had made no change in the general views of the holy Bishop. His idea still was to gather together those pious ladies whose weak health did not allow them to join the Carmelites, Dominicanesses, or Poor Clares, among all of whom corporal austerities were of obligation; to unite them under very mild Constitutions, suitable to their delicate temperament; and to employ them in the service of the poor. His first care, in consequence, was to abolish the strict inclosure he had established for the year of the novitiate, and to regulate the order to be observed in visiting the sick and the poor, the definitive end of the Institute. But as the Community yet numbered so few, only three professed Sisters, he decided that the service of the poor should not begin until January 1, 1612. This left seven months for an increase of members and the drawing up of the first Rules.

St. Francis de Sales determined to settle the latter point at once; and June 10th, four days after St. Chantal's profession, he went to the convent. It was evening, and he took his seat near a door leading out into the little garden. M. Michel, his secretary, who always accompanied him, was by his side, and the Sisters on the floor around him. He began: "My dearest children, now that we are increasing in number, we must regulate our little affairs. First, we shall rise at five o'clock. As for our Sister Anne-Jacqueline

Coste and myself," he added, smiling, "we can do that easily, for we are country-folk." Then he regulated the order of exercises precisely as they are observed at the present day. When he spoke of dinner and supper, Mother de Chantal asked: "Father, how shall we do on fast-days? The Carmelites eat only one ounce of bread at collation on fast-days of the Church, and four on those of the Rule."—"O my child," answered the saint, "we receive the infirm, therefore we must keep to a middle course. We shall eat three ounces of bread with a little fruit." This decided the point, and no more questions being asked, he passed to another article of the Rule. "My children," he said, "we must show one another the greatest respect. I know that the Jesuit Fathers, if they meet a hundred times a day, raise their cap to one another. We shall make an inclination of the head every time we meet; and that all our actions may have a religious bearing, instead of making a courtesy to seculars, we shall bow. Shall it not be so, my dear children?" "Yes, my Lord," answered all the Sisters excepting Sister Favre. She said nothing, being a little disappointed at the prohibition to courtesy.

"A Feuillant passing through Annecy," continued the Bishop, "told me that there were in Italy nuns so attached to their beads, pictures, crosses, etc., that some of them would rather leave their convent than give them up. It occurred to me, therefore, my dear children, that it would be well for us to change such articles occasionally, that we may cling to God alone. This will be done on the last day of the year, when the patron saints are drawn."

"Father," asked Sister de Bréchard, "how shall we change our crosses and beads?"

"You will take your crosses," replied the saint, "your beads, pictures, and whatever else is to be changed, and make little piles of them. On each a billet inscribed with a saint's name shall be laid, and then you will draw for them, so that no preference may be shown. But here is something better.—It is this," he resumed after a moment's silence: "I have a great aversion to those religious who are called 'Madame Senior,' 'Madame Elected,' Madame *this*, Madame *that*. There must be no distinction, no mention of seniority

among us who are of no importance. You will put *No. 1* on the first pile, *No. 2* on the second, *No. 3* on the third, and then you will draw for them. In this way we shall live perfectly despoiled of everything. Shall we not, my daughters?"

With these words he rose, gave them his blessing, and withdrew. Two days after he returned. Mother de Chantal and all the Sisters, even the novices, went with him over to the orchard near the spring. They placed a seat for him under the grape arbor and seated themselves on the ground around him.

"My Lord," said Mother de Chantal, "tell us something about affability. What is it?"

All pressed around the holy Bishop, for they had touched upon his favorite subject. Scarcely, however, had he commenced to speak of the charming virtue and to explain how necessary it is to make one's self all to all, when a clap of thunder was heard and large drops of rain obliged them to return to the house. They withdrew to the gallery to wait for the storm to pass. But every minute it increased. The Sisters, above all the novices, were very much frightened, and, as they walked up and down with the Bishop, they made at every clap of thunder huge signs of the Cross.

"My Lord," said a young Sister, Marie-Marguerite Milletot, "I am so frightened."

"O my daughter," was the saint's smiling reply, "do not be afraid. Lightning strikes only saints and great sinners, and you are neither."

The storm continuing, the Sisters knelt down with M. Michel Favre to pray; but the Bishop continued to walk. When it had somewhat abated, Mother de Chantal said: "My Lord Father, give each of us some virtue to practise."

"Certainly, Mother," he replied; "and I will begin with you." The Sisters withdrew to a corner, and he called them one after another, and still continuing his walk, privately gave to each a practice. After he left, each divulged her secret. To the ardent Mother de Chantal he gave indifference and death of the will in God; to Sister Favre, whose imagination was so lively, he gave the presence of God; to Sister de Bréchard, who was tormented by in-

terior troubles, resignation to God's will; to Sister Claude-Françoise Roget, who, like all consumptives, was somewhat nervous, modesty and tranquillity; to Sister de Châtel, love of her own abjection; to Sister Marie-Marguerite Milletot, who was portress, mortification of the senses; to Sister Fichet, affability; to Sister Thioller, interior humility; to the young Sister Claude-Agnes de la Roche, who had not yet laid aside the stateliness of her worldly manners, exterior humility; to Sister Marie-Aimée de Blonay, who had been there but a very short time, and whose heart was still bleeding from the sacrifices she had been obliged to make, forgetfulness of the world and of her relatives; and, lastly, to Sister Marie-Marthe Legros, the last received, mortification of the passions.

Those charming visits were often renewed. St. Francis de Sales went almost daily to say Mass for them. Once, when they had lost the key of the sanctuary, he quietly went up to the large gallery, knelt down near the fourth window, that nearest to the altar, and said his prayers in preparation for Mass. When he had finished, he walked up and down, still praying, until the key was found. Whilst thus occupied, the Sisters through devotion went to peep at him through the crack of the door, and they were struck with admiration at his humility, modesty, and unalterable meekness.

After Mass he generally remained some time to receive the Sisters' account of conscience, instruct them in the spiritual life, and discuss subjects bearing upon the welfare of the rising Institute. These conversations were held sometimes promenading in the gallery, sometimes seated under the hornbeam hedge of the garden. He was always cheerful and gracious, provoking questions from the Sisters and answering them with that doctrinal precision and mildness of interpretation familiar to him.

"Now, Sisters," he said one day, "you must be promptly obedient and say to God frankly: 'My God, what dost Thou wish me to do?' not like those monks of whom St. Bernard speaks, and to whom it was necessary to say, 'Brother, what would you like to do?'" And when one of the Sisters asked how they were to act if a Superioress should require of them

anything contrary to the laws of the Church, he answered that they ought not to obey any more than if she had said: "Sister, go to the garden and gather me some flowers, but, to do so more quickly, throw yourself out of the window." "In such a case," he said, "you should mildly and respectfully reply: 'Mother, I prefer to go down by the stairs, if you please.'"

In these familiar conversations every one had something to say. The youngest Sisters, the novices, even the Out-Sisters, emboldened by the saint's gentle and affectionate manner, put a thousand questions to him, some of them not always very discreet. "My Lord," said an Out-Sister to him one day, "when on the street, you keep your eyes carefully lowered."

"Ah! my daughter," responded the saint quickly, "how else could I walk in the presence of God?"

"My Lord Father," said a Sister interrupting him in the middle of a conversation, "are you now in the presence of God?"

He answered, laughing: "You seem to think that it depends only on yourself to keep yourself in the presence of God. Is He not everywhere? Should we not think of Him always?"

The least incidents of the Community, those thousand little nothings that occur in daily life, inspired him with numberless happy expressions, ingenious remarks, and wise prohibitions, which the Sisters carefully wrote down. It was thus without premeditation and without method were built up slowly and practically the Constitutions that were later to regulate the Institute. One day, for example, Sister Marie-Péronne de Châtel having through mortification eaten a worm-eaten apple at dinner, the others joked her about it during recreation. The saint heard of the matter, and ordained that thenceforth the Sisters should lower their eyes in the refectory, for thus they could practise mortification without being noticed. On another occasion, when Sister de Bréchard was officiating at the Office, she went out to sing the *Oremus* without her Office-book. When she came to the *Per eumdem Christum*, her memory suddenly failed her, to the great amusement of the Sisters. St. Francis de Sales

heard of this, too. He at once directed that the officiant should say nothing by heart, and made a note of it to insert it in the Constitutions. Another time some one had given to Françoise de Chantal, whom her mother was educating in the convent, a little bird, and her sister, the young Baroness de Thorens, had brought her a squirrel. But the bird and the squirrel soon had other playmates besides Françoise, as the novices found them much to their taste. "Leave it to me," said St. Francis de Sales, "I'll see to it;" and he inserted in the Constitutions a formal prohibition to keep in the convent any bird or animal for useless amusement.

We should never finish were we to depict those numberless scenes, charming in their simplicity and grace, in which we behold the saint descending to the least details, noting the smallest inadvertence, an accent omitted in the singing of the Office or a bow badly made on entering the chapel. He carefully observed the faults of all the Sisters, delicately and playfully pointed them out when occasion offered, in a manner that instructed without wounding, now making use of them to excite to piety, or again as matter for the Constitutions of his Institute.[1]

Under such direction, at once so wise and so energetic, it is easy to foresee to what perfection would attain souls like Mother de Chantal, Sister de Bréchard, Sister Favre, and their companions, all so zealous in the service of God. The poverty of the Community was extreme. Their food was coarse and insufficient, their linen much worn; they had no fire in winter, and frequently no remedies in sickness; and yet, although all had been reared in luxury, never was a complaint heard. Their utter despoilment was lighted up by peace, serenity, and cheerfulness, proof against every trial. One day, for example, the first Shrove-Tuesday of their religious life, they had for dinner but one pear and a little bread. They divided the pear into eight pieces, one piece for each Sister, and never did they make a happier meal. Another very cold day, having kindled no fire,—and,

[1] We have already said, but it will, perhaps, be well to repeat, that there is no play of the imagination in what we are relating. We are copying simply and exactly contemporary manuscripts carefully preserved in the archives at Annecy and never before published.

indeed, they never had any,—all suffered greatly in their hands and feet. Sister Favre was even obliged to keep her bed. Very far from pitying their sufferings, St. Francis de Sales spared no effort to teach his daughters to disregard them. Having by chance met Sister Fichet, with her swollen hands wrapped up in a piece of old black cloth, he thus addressed her: "What! my child, using a muff! I have none, and yet look at my hands!" This was enough for Sister Fichet. She threw the piece of cloth on the ground, and never after did she cover her hands even when severely chapped.

All were provided with hair-cloth, cinctures, and iron bracelets, which they changed every year with their crosses and beads. They frequently disciplined themselves with nettles and practised other great austerities. Even little Françoise de Chantal aspired to a participation in these exercises of penance. "When she had the ague, she would wait for the day on which she had no fever, and secretly send her maid in search of nettles for a discipline."

God recompensed this generous way of living by extraordinary prayer. Nearly all the Sisters attained the highest degree of union with God. Some might be seen leaving prayer quite out of themselves and, as it were, ravished in God. One day Sister de Bréchard left the choir in a state of transport, exclaiming: "I am nothing. I can do nothing. I am worth nothing!" and rang the first peal for supper with the large bell, instead of the one used for community exercises.

Even during recreation they were so fervent and inflamed with divine love, that the mere mention of the name of God threw them into raptures and ecstasies. This happened so often that St. Francis de Sales went one day to the convent purposely to order them to converse during recreation on indifferent subjects, lest so close application to heavenly things might injure their health.

But a greater fear than this was occupying the mind of the holy Foundress, and it inspired her with an admirable prayer. "Observing that these great favors were attracting the admiration of the world," she wrote later, "I was strongly inspired to beg Almighty God to keep us humble.

Day and night these words were in my mind: '*Your life is hid with Christ in God.*' I meditated upon them with great interior consolation, and having communicated to our Blessed Father, and by his order to our good Jesuit Father Jacques de Bonival, my inspirations upon the subject which led me to supplicate God the Father that He would deign to hide our life in Himself with Jesus Christ, His Crucified Son, they approved it, and both said Holy Mass for that intention. I communicated at our Blessed Father's and made my thanksgiving whilst Rev. Father de Bonival said his. When that excellent servant of God took the Body and Blood of Christ, I received a very great interior light. I felt certain that our petition was agreeable to the Divine Goodness, and that this same Divine Goodness had granted to our dear Institute the great gift of an interior life, hidden and lovingly suffering with Jesus Christ; that His immense liberality would not retrench any of the graces in store for souls faithful to Him in this little Congregation; but that they would be, like the graces of the Son of God, in proportion to our nothingness, hidden in God and manifested only in eternity; that if in some souls they should at times become visible, and if any prodigy should occur, it would be as an act of homage to the transfiguration and miraculous works of Our Saviour Jesus. What consoled me exceedingly in this view of the matter was the fact that our Blessed Father, Rev. Father de Bonival, and I, all had the same sentiments. We thence concluded that Almighty God wished the Sisters of our Congregation to be admirers and imitators of the lowliness of His Divine Son and of His perfect life, interiorly hidden in God, and yet quite common in the eyes of the world; for which we endeavored to return Him infinite thanks."

The humility of these excellent religious equalled their love. There was among them a noble and constant rivalry as to who should most exalt her neighbor and debase herself. Thence it came that, when a Sister was absent from recreation, the others would say to St. Chantal: "Mother, tell us something about Sister N.'s virtues." And the recreation passed happily in the difficult task of listening to the praise of another.

St. Chantal set the example in everything. Neither her age nor her position as Superioress and Foundress appeared to her sufficient to dispense herself from the lowest and most humiliating duties of the house. She took her turn to serve in the refectory, to sweep the stairs, and to prepare the meals. She used to call the week that fell to her to perform these humble services her "*good week.*" She foresaw any affairs that might occur, "in order," as she said, "that, if possible, I may not be prevented from discharging my good week."

As they often wanted milk for poor children, they bought a cow and, that she might not injure the young trees in the inclosure, the Sisters had to mind it. Our saint never failed to go in her turn; and it was exceedingly edifying to see the modesty and holy joy with which she discharged this humble duty.

Whilst things were thus progressing, Mother de Chantal received sad news. Her father died August 11, 1611, aged seventy-three. "My daughter," said St. Francis de Sales to her, one morning after Mass, "God wishes to be your only father, for He has taken to Himself him whom He gave you on earth. You lose a good parent, I a kind friend. God has thus willed it, and that says all." Mother de Chantal had always loved her father tenderly, and his death caused her great grief, which was tempered, however, by the consoling details imparted to her by St. Francis de Sales. President Frémyot was in death, as in life, a great and generous Christian. Full of faith, he had the courage to make his last confession to his own son André, from whose hand he also received the Holy Viaticum. He was lamented by all the good.

St. Chantal keenly felt this loss. That ever-bleeding wound in her heart, of which we have before spoken, opened afresh: "Had not her withdrawal from her family hastened this good father's death? Had she waited only one year, she might have attended him in his last sickness! What would her son do? Would he not throw himself away, now that he was deprived of the wise advice of so experienced a guardian, now that he had not even his mother to watch over him?" She did not hesitate one instant. True

mother that she was, she resolved to go at once to Burgundy, to receive and transfer to her children their inheritance from their grandfather, and to advise in family council about the future of her son.

The Sisters, who had shared the sorrow of the saint, were deeply distressed at the thought of her leaving them, and that, perhaps, for several months. The work was scarcely begun, and already it was to be deprived of her who was its soul and its life! Mother de Chantal hastily made her preparations, renewed her vows of obedience to St. Francis de Sales, admitted to their profession three novices whose time of probation was over, Sister Roget, Sister Marie-Péronne de Châtel, and Sister Milletot, and appointed Sister de Bréchard to govern the community during her absence. Sister de Bréchard was from Burgundy; therefore St. Chantal would not take her with her, but chose Sister Favre to accompany her. She then enlisted the services of the young Baron de Thorens as their escort and, with the blessing of St. Francis de Sales, set out August 23, 1611.

The Bishop himself started next day for Thonon. Mother de Bréchard was distressed beyond expression at being thus left alone. She went up to the *Gallery*, where she had so often been comforted by the advice of the two saints, and casting herself on her knees before a Crucifix to pour out her sorrow to God, she distinctly heard these words: "The Father and the Mother have gone, but I, who am thy God, I am here. Why art thou troubled?" This consoled her and prepared her for the trials awaiting her.[1]

Though on his way to Thonon, St. Francis de Sales was, in mind and heart, following Mother de Chantal to Dijon. "I have been in Thonon three days," he wrote to her, "but, O God, my very dear daughter, I know not by what road I have come, whether that to Thonon or that to Burgundy; but I certainly feel that I am more in Burgundy than here. Yes, my daughter, since it thus pleases the Divine Goodness, I am inseparable from your soul." After a few words on her health, about which he was anxious on account of the

[1] *Vies des premières Religieuses*, vol. i. p. 163. This fact, written by Mother de Chaugy, was revised by St. Chantal.

fatigue and the heat, he turned to the affairs of her soul, which interested him still more. "Ah! I beg you, my dearest daughter, to keep close to Jesus and Mary in all that you have to do, that the multiplicity of business matters may not trouble or their difficulty astonish you. Do one thing at a time as well as you can, faithfully giving it your attention, but sweetly and gently. If God allows you to succeed in it, we shall bless Him for it; if not, we shall still bless Him." And again, he utters this admirable expression: "O my daughter, treat of earthly affairs with your eyes fixed on heaven." [1]

It was thus St. Chantal acted. She reached Dijon toward the middle of September, and received from her relatives a welcome full of joy. Her first step was to visit her father's tomb. He had, on account of his rank and virtue, been interred in the Church of Notre-Dame.[2]

There she prayed and wept, after which she withdrew into strict retirement. Though visited by a crowd of friends she returned no visits, and left the house only to go to church.

From Dijon she went to Bourbilly and Monthelon. She spent nearly four months in her castles regulating everything with such firmness and wisdom as to elicit the admiration of the Baron de Thorens and the other noblemen of their party. At Bourbilly the relatives of Baron de Chantal assembled a number of learned men, and even some religious, to persuade her by conscientious and doctrinal reasons, as they said, to remain in Burgundy to attend to her children's property. Not being cloistered, she could live at home, as do the Sisters of the Third Orders of St. Dominic and of St. Francis. To their arguments she graciously replied that such was not her vocation. One of her female relatives, seeing that nothing could shake her, fell into a passion and told her that "it was a shame to see her hidden under two yards of tammy, and that, if they would listen to her, they would tear her veil into a thousand pieces." To

[1] Letters of September 10 and September 12, 1611.

[2] His mausoleum, surmounted by his statue, has since been removed to the Cathedral of Dijon, where it is still to be seen.

which the saint made the queen-like reply: "He who loves his crown more than his head will never lose one without the other."

When St. Francis de Sales heard of what was going on, he wrote to Mother de Chantal to strengthen her in her resolution. "Had you married some chevalier at the other end of Gascony or Brittany, you would have left everything, and no one would have said a word. Now that your separation from your family is by no means so entire, and that you have reserved the liberty of giving moderate attention to your children and their property, some are trying to cast reproach upon the step, just because what you have done has been done for God." He exhorted her to make no account of the opposition, and left the length of her stay in Burgundy to her own discretion and prudence.[1]

From Bourbilly Mother de Chantal returned to Dijon, where the most determined efforts were made to detain her, at least a year. But she resisted every entreaty. She placed Celse-Bénigne at college in Dijon, begged her uncle, M. Claude Frémyot, to be a father to him, and, on account of the news received from Annecy, made hasty preparations for her departure.

This news was not good. Almost all the Sisters were sick, and one of them, Sister Marie-Péronne de Châtel, even in danger of death. Mother de Bréchard, the Superioress in Mother de Chantal's absence, was consuming her strength in prayer, fatigue, the charge of Superiority by day, and the care of the sick by night. It was feared that she, too, would succumb. "My dear daughter," wrote St. Francis de Sales to her, "you must take sufficient food and rest. Charitably leave some of the labor to others, and do not aspire to all the crowns. Your dear neighbor will be delighted to win some of them." [2]

In fact, there was the most admirable emulation among all the Sisters. They disputed above all the happiness of watching by the bed of Sister Marie-Péronne de Châtel, as

[1] Letter of November 15, 1611.

[2] Letter without certain date, taken from the *Vie de la Mère de Bréchard*. See *Vies des premières Mères de la Visitation*, etc., vol. i. p. 163.

much through affection for her as from their desire to witness the heroic virtue she practised in sickness. Although tormented by a burning fever, for five days consumed by thirst so intense that her parched tongue adhered to her palate, she would not touch the glass of fresh water at her side. She took pleasure in looking at it, and she would exclaim: "My God, great, indeed, must be the empire of Thy grace, since, thirsty as I am, Thou givest me strength to abstain from drinking in order to obey Thee." Then taking the glass in her hand, she would add: "You are very thirsty, poor Péronne, but you shall not drink, your Saviour does not wish it. Would you be cowardly enough to lose for a little thirst the glory of having always obeyed Him?"[1]

Similar words were constantly escaping her lips, and the Sisters could hardly bring themselves to leave her bedside, which had become so excellent a school of virtue. One night when she was very low, and St. Francis de Sales, after giving her the Holy Viaticum, had sent M. Michel Favre to assist her in her last moments, Mother de Bréchard ordered Sister Claude Françoise Roget and Sister Marie-Adrienne Fichet to go to bed. But she was obeyed only after giving the order three times. M. Michel Favre, in rendering to St. Francis de Sales an account of the invalid's condition, said a word, also, about the disobedience of the Sisters. Next day the Bishop, who had passed the night in prayer, conjuring God not to withdraw from the world a subject so useful for the advancement of His glory and so valuable to the new Institute, went to the convent to administer Extreme Unction to the sick Sister. She had been unconscious for several hours, but whilst the saint was anointing her she opened her eyes, looked at him calmly, as if just awaking from a deep sleep, then slept again for some hours, and at last awoke perfectly cured. All the Sisters were present, and they left the infirmary with the Bishop to accompany him to the door. "See, my Sisters," said St. Francis de Sales, alluding to the disobedience of the preceding evening, "let us not be like girls of the world. When their mother says to them: Do this or do that, they reply: 'Yes, mother, I will do it presently.'

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, part ii. chap. v.

That's the way, provided we say: 'Poor Sister, poor Sister!' we think we have been very obedient." The guilty ones, though knowing well that these words were addressed to them, pretended not to understand. As the saint was going downstairs, they pulled M. Michel's mantle, saying: "You told him, you told him!" St. Francis de Sales, who overheard them, smiled sweetly; but neither he nor his companion looked back.

That evening, St. Francis de Sales being informed that the invalid was doing well, sent her this charming little note: "Courage, in the name of Our Lord, my poor, very dear daughter, Péronne-Marie! Let us get entirely well to serve again our Divine Master in holiness and justice all the days of our life. Keep yourself sweetly at rest in God, in order to regain your strength from His hand, that when our dear Mother returns she will find us all well and lively. What would that good Mother say if in her absence we had let her dear Péronne die?"[1]

Meanwhile St. Chantal, having finished the settlement of her father's estate, began her journey to Annecy, where she arrived December 24, 1611. She alighted first at the residence of the Bishop, with whom she conferred a long time, and then repaired to the convent, where she was impatiently awaited. It was Christmas Eve. Although just returned from a long journey on horseback and in severe weather, and although very much fatigued, she assisted at the whole of the midnight Office. Her presence inflamed the Sisters with zeal. "I do not know," says Mother de Chaugy, "that the feasts of Christmas ever passed with a holier and more devout joy."[2]

What urged St. Chantal's return to Annecy was the approach of January 1, 1612, the day fixed by St. Francis de Sales both for the definitive election of the Superioress and other officers of the community, and the commencement of their visits to the sick and the poor.

These duties, it will be remembered, had been deferred on account of the small number of professed Sisters. On the last day of the year 1611, the Sisters proceeded to the elec-

[1] Letter of July, 1611.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, part ii. chap. v.

tion of a Superioress, who, in her turn, was to choose her officers. Mother de Chantal was elected Superioress and Sister Favre Assistant. Sister de Bréchard was appointed Mistress of Novices; Sister Roget, Treasurer and Procuratrix; Sister de Châtel, Dispenser and Linen-keeper; Sister Milletot, Portress; whilst Sister Fichet was charged with the sacristy and the duty of aid to the parlor.

After these appointments were announced, Sister Favre knelt down and said: "Mother, we ask you for an obedience to visit the sick, that, on the Day of Judgment, Our Lord may say to us: 'I was sick, and you visited Me.'" St. Chantal then selected some of the Sisters for this purpose, and the next day after grace at dinner she said: "Sisters N. N., and we with them, will go on the part of the community to visit Our Lord's poor, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." She and two of the Sisters then went to the chapel, to ask Our Lord's blessing, and going out with their veils lowered, began the service of the poor.

"In these visits," says Mother de Chantal, "we not only consoled the sick and assisted them with the service of our hands, but we gave them all they needed in the way of food, linen, bed-covering, pillows, etc. Some of them were in the utmost poverty, misery, and dirt, full of vermin and stench, so that such a love as that of these dear Sisters was necessary even to touch them. But they went about their task with incomparable courage, cleaning the poor creatures and making them comfortable. They were sometimes wet to the very shoulders, not having strength to rise, and with no one to help them. Some were covered with ulcers, others full of vermin. The Sisters dressed the sores of the former and cut the hair of the latter; in a word, they did everything that was necessary for the relief and cleanliness of the sufferers, changing their linen, making their beds, arranging fresh straw for those who were lying on the ground, and cleaning all around them. As far as they could they sent physicians to visit them, and, when it was time to give them the Last Sacraments, they notified the priest, spread sheets over the beds, and covered unsightly portions of the room with white linen. They also buried the dead. The poor

people were full of love and gratitude; and, indeed, they taught us many a great lesson. We were amazed at the virtues they practised in their misery, particularly their patience and resignation to God's will, whether to suffer or to die." [1]

The above is from St. Chantal's own pen, in her account of the foundation of the first convent of Annecy. She says nothing of her own heroic part in this service of the poor, but history has happily preserved it for us. The wonders of Bourbilly and Monthelon were repeated at Annecy. The heart of the saint, so great in charity, seemed still greater since she had more fully consecrated it to God. The witnesses at the process of her canonization unanimously declared "that the venerable servant of God reserved for herself the care of the most disgusting among the poor sick, those whose appearance and presence were the most insupportable; that she herself cleaned them, took home with her their half-rotten linen and rags to wash them, cut with her own hands their hair even when almost putrid from filth and vermin, and never forgot, amidst all this, their eternal salvation, but prepared them by touching instructions to receive with fruit the Sacraments of the Church." [2]

The witnesses supported their attestations by facts. Two or three will suffice to give an idea of the saint's heroism.

Mother Marie-Aimée de Sonnaz deposed: "The venerable servant of God displayed extraordinary charity in the case of a poor woman whose whole body was paralyzed, and who was, moreover, attacked by dysentery. Mother de Chantal went to visit and clean her nearly every morning, ordering her companion to turn away from the bad odor, lest it might inconvenience her, saying that, as for herself, she was used to it. She rendered the same services to another miserable creature so covered with ulcers and vermin as to be an object of horror. She was at the same time attacked by a violent cold, but being too weak to expectorate, the servant of God, with ingenious and charitable skill, took the phlegm from her mouth with a piece of white linen. She combed her every morning to remove the matter from her head, as

[1] Manuscript *Mémoires* of St. Chantal.

[2] *Procès de Canonization, super art.* xxxii.

she did for the other poor. But not satisfied with the assistance and remedies bestowed upon the body, she labored zealously at the salvation of her soul, moving her to so sincere repentance that the public was as much edified and astonished as rejoiced at it. She acted in like manner, and made the Sisters do the same, toward all the other sick, preparing them, at the very first visit, to receive worthily the Sacraments of the Church, washing them after death and laying them out with her own hands. She was never better satisfied than when the sick were covered with wounds and their diseases most infectious, saying that it seemed to her as if she were then dressing the wounds of Our Lord during His Passion. All this the deponent says she learned from Mother Marie-Adrienne Fichet, who accompanied the said venerable Mother on those occasions." [1]

To these details, which make one shudder, Mother Marie-Adrienne Fichet adds others still more heroic. "Our Blessed Mother," she says, "had naturally so great an aversion to killing lice, that she used to say leprosy and cancers were to her nothing compared with it, and that she would rather dress the sores of several lepers than kill one of these vermin. One day the Out-Sister informed her that there was a poor woman covered with vermin on the road. Mother de Chantal had her brought into the garden, and stripped to her chemise. Then, taking the clothes, she shut herself up with the Out-Sister, not wishing to be seen by others, and spent a good two hours cleaning them and killing the vermin." [2]

"In a word," continues Mother Marie-Aimée de Sonnaz, "she displayed such courage and heroism, she manifested so little disgust at the filth of the poor, that one of her religious asked her one day how nature could bear up against things so revolting. The saint answered that it had never entered her mind that she was rendering these services to a creature, for it always seemed to her that she was dressing the wounds of Jesus Christ in the person of the poor." [3]

[1] Deposition of Sister Marie-Aimée de Sonnaz.

[2] *Recueil de ce qui s'est passé . . . à la petite maison de la Galerie,* etc.

[3] Deposition of Mother Marie-Aimée de Sacconay, *super art.* xxxii.

This it was, in fact, that both sustained and recompensed Mother de Chantal. Those wounds, that were to her the wounds of Jesus Christ Himself, emitted perfumes and rays that attracted and illumined her soul. One day in particular, whilst attending a poor woman who had taken refuge in a stable and cast herself down among the cattle to give birth to her child, she received an extraordinary favor. She had just baptized the babe, which was in danger of death, and was again busy with the mother, when, suddenly, a sublime revelation of the Stable of Bethlehem, the Virgin Mother, and the Child Jesus rapt her in ecstasy. She never spoke explicitly of this fact, though she often said "that she could never pass that stable without gratefully recalling the immense favors God had there bestowed upon her."[1]

Mother Favre, of whom St. Chantal used to say that it was impossible to express her holy zeal when visiting the poor, also received a reward, different from that just related, but still very precious. One day, as she and Sister Fichet were passing the Bishop's residence, St. Francis de Sales, who was confined to his bed by a sore leg, had them called in. "You are going to visit the sick," he said; "here is one who has a sore leg. Would you do him the charity to dress it?" Delighted to render their Blessed Father this service, they laid upon his wound a hand trembling with respect and joy. They made him suffer much, but he said nothing. When they had finished, he remarked: "My children, when you dress the sores of the poor, do it with a very steady hand and without hurry; for when the raw flesh is touched too roughly it causes great pain." Returned home, they related their adventure to the other Sisters, who became quite jealous, and begged for the honor of attending to the holy patient. But he would not listen to their petition. "I will not see you," was his reply, "until I can take my sore leg to the parlor."[2]

Scarcely had they begun to visit the poor when they perceived the impossibility of remaining longer at the *Little Gallery-House*. The faubourg was too far from the town.

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 143.
[2] Manuscript *Mémoires* of Mother Marie-Adrienne Fichet.

In their visits to the poor much time was lost and great fatigue incurred. Besides this, the continual sickness of the Sisters gave rise to the fear that the site was unhealthy; but the principal reason for a change was, that it no longer sufficed for the accommodation of the daily increasing community. They resolved to sell it. They did so, and bought a house considerably larger in the centre of the city. Not only the actual size of the new building proved an attraction, but the facility of enlarging it and the very moderate price at which its owner, Philippe Nicolin, a member of the Genevan Council, offered it to them. Having sent all the furniture to the boat that plied on the lake, the Sisters left the *Gallery* October 30, 1612, just two years, four months, and twenty-five days since St. Chantal with Mesdemoiselles de Bréchard and Favre took possession of it.

On leaving Annecy for the shore of the lake, one soon meets to the right a small, unpretentious house with very narrow, curious-looking windows. In the worm-eaten door there is still to be seen the iron grate that St. Chantal had placed there; but there is now no trace of the covered wooden gallery that led across the road from the house to the orchard opposite. It was here that the events of 1610, 1611, and 1612, just related, took place.

The Order of the Visitation has since had some very celebrated houses: that of Lyons, which heard the last words of St. Francis de Sales and preserved his heart; that of Moulins, which received the last sigh of St. Chantal; that of Paray-le-Monial, from which sprang the tender devotion to the Sacred Heart; and, above all, that of Annecy, in which rest the remains of the two saints. But to none of these houses are attached sweeter reminiscences than those that cluster around the *Little Gallery-House*. It is in the history of the Order what in the life of a man is the place in which he first saw the light. It is a cradle.

The Sisters had hardly concluded the sale, in 1612, before they regretted it, and began to take active, though for a long time fruitless, measures to regain possession of it. Indeed, St. Chantal died before they succeeded in their efforts. It was not until 1658, seventeen years after the death of the saint and forty-six after they had parted with the property,

that they found themselves again proprietors of the spot consecrated by the footprints of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal. It was now more than a cradle—it was a relic.

On May 12, 1658, the Bishop of Geneva, Charles-Auguste de Sales, conducted the Sisters of the Visitation by a covered bridge to the *Gallery*. This bridge connected it with the second convent of Annecy, the foundation of which we shall soon relate. They visited first St. Chantal's room, and there the Bishop, who was the nephew and second successor of St. Francis de Sales, addressed them in a few words. After recalling the beginning of the Order, so poor, so obscure, but so fervent, he exclaimed: "O God! what holy words have been uttered, what holy actions performed in this house, perhaps upon the very spot on which I am now standing! Oh, that you knew the conversations of those holy souls! Oh, that you were so happy as to participate in their spirit!" Then raising his eyes and seeing over the fireplace seven crosses engraven upon a shield, "See," he said, "it is not without design that Almighty God allowed the builders of this house to place those crosses there. They are the seven first Mothers of our Institute, they are the arms of the Sisters of the Visitation. Whoever would recognize a daughter of Holy Mary must see whether she bears the ensigns armorial of the Cross. They are the escutcheons chosen by your first Mothers. They were living crosses. They bore upon their own person Jesus Christ dead and crucified." After these beautiful words, the pious prelate conducted the Sisters into all the other rooms, finding in each a motive for some heartfelt expression.

There was, at that time, in the whole Order only one religious who had lived with St. Chantal in the *Little Gallery-House*. This was Sister Marie-Adrienne Fichet. She was eighty years old and was residing in the monastery of Lyons. The Sisters begged the Bishop to recall her to Annecy, that they might gather from her lips an account of all that she had seen and heard of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal in those two short but important years of the foundation of the Institute. He yielded to their entreaties. But how depict the joy of the venerable old Sister on seeing again her first home in religion! She dragged herself on

her knees through all the rooms, kissing the ground at every spot on which she had seen either of the saintly Founders. Ten days were passed in these pious pilgrimages and in long conversations about the first days of the Order. The aged Sister related every incident with remembrance as fresh as if recalling the events of the day before.

From these notes, dictated by Sister Fichet, we have drawn the hitherto unpublished details of the first two years of the Visitation.

CHAPTER XV.

FIRST TRIALS OF THE RISING ORDER.—BUILDING OF THE FIRST CONVENT OF ANNECY.

1612—1614.

Trials, the condition of every great undertaking in this world, were not wanting to the Visitation in its early days. The foundation was hardly accomplished when the Foundress fell ill. Her maladies were strange. Sometimes she was seized with pain so violent that they thought she would die; again, her body would suddenly swell and she would become speechless. The physicians knew not what to say. "I recommend to your prayers," wrote St. Francis de Sales, "the Mother Abbess of our new hive. She is much tormented by sickness, and although our good M. Grandis is one of the ablest physicians I have ever seen, he knows not what to prescribe for her malady. It proceeds, he says, from some cause unknown to Galen. I know not," adds the saint, "whether the devil wants to frighten us or whether she is not too eager for the harvest. . . . Whatever it may be, I take this enterprise so much to heart that nothing surprises me in its execution, and I believe that God will certainly make of this Mother another St. Paula, St. Angela, St. Catherine of Siena, or one of those holy widows who, like beautiful and fragrant violets, are so lovely to look upon in the sacred garden of the Church." [1]

Finding the physicians of Annecy unable to relieve Mother de Chantal, St. Francis de Sales sent to Geneva for a celebrated doctor of that city. But the result was the same. After carefully examining the case, he declared that there was something strange in her attacks that could not be accounted for by ordinary laws; and, although a Protestant,

[1] Letter of April 3, 1611.

he remarked: "As this lady is so virtuous, I have no doubt that there is some heavenly influence at work to keep her in her state of suffering." [1]

The admirable detachment of the two holy Founders shone with peculiar brightness at this trying period. "My daughter," said St. Francis de Sales one day to Mother de Chantal as she lay at the point of death, "perhaps Almighty God is satisfied with our good-will, as of old He was satisfied with Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son. If so, may His holy name be blessed!" "Yes, my very dear Father," replied the invalid, "may His will be done in time and in eternity!" Another day the Bishop uttered the following beautiful words: "My daughter, if God wishes us to leave the work half-finished, we must be as prompt in ending as in beginning." [2]

And again he wrote in a letter: "I ask a Mass of you for the health of our Mother de Chantal. For ten or twelve days her grievous illness has led me to make my prayer upon the third petition of the *Pater noster: Fiat voluntas tua.* I am perfectly submissive to the Divine Will. If it please God to take this Mother, I offer her to Him. If it please Him that our work be accomplished, He will leave us the instrument for it; if not, He will lock that instrument up in His eternal cabinet. For the sake of the fraternal, paternal, and filial affection that unites us, I must acknowledge to you, my dear Father, that God's way of proceeding in this whole matter keeps me in a state of constant wonder, but with a certain unwavering hope that He is leading to the brink of the grave to prove that He slays only to resuscitate. My every thought shall finish with *fiat voluntas tua.*" [3]

Mother de Chantal astonished the Sisters by her serenity amid intense suffering, and her absolute obedience in the use of remedies, the inutility of which she knew better than any one else. Above all did she edify them by her humble indifference, though seeing what had for years been the

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, part ii., vii.

[2] Manuscript *Fondation* of Annecy, p. 17.

[3] This unpublished letter bears no date; but its insertion in the manuscript History of the Foundation of Annecy shows that it belongs to this period.

object of so many prayers and painful sacrifices on the point of falling through.

Whilst Almighty God was thus trying the holy Founders, the world began to load them with raillery and criticism. But such treatment should cause neither astonishment nor complaint. To found a Religious Order is to create a focus of virtue, an inexhaustible source of devotedness to God and man. It is to establish in the midst of the world an asylum in which the soul may recollect itself far from the vain bustle of the world; strengthen itself by obedience; transfigure itself by humility; and, dead to self, inflamed with the pure love of God, scatter around it the sweet odor of Jesus Christ, which attracts to virtue. Is it, then, astonishing that the Founders of Religious Orders, more than any others, have been the objects of calumny, outrage, and most violent persecution? This is the history of St. Benedict, St. Dominic, St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Ignatius. It must, then, be that of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal.

It was said that all the beginnings of the new Order were merely a fire of straw; that it was nonsense in the Bishop of Geneva to waste his time with women; that he was establishing a hospital rather than a Religious Congregation; that it was, indeed, worth while to found an Order for the purpose of introducing therein softness and relaxation; that the Bishop of Geneva had made a fine discovery, namely, that of going to heaven by a road of thornless roses. Some sorry jesters went so far as to call the new Institute the "Confraternity of the Descent from the Cross," because, as they said, the religious, by flying from sufferings, had taken Jesus Christ down from the Cross.

Persons of high standing entertained similar ideas. One day St. Francis de Sales pointed out to one of them a window that he wished to have walled up. "You do well, my Lord, to wall up the windows," was the reply, "for there is no light whatever in the enterprise." The saint replied by humble silence and a mild glance.

It was particularly during Mother de Chantal's long attacks of illness that censure ran highest. As soon as she died, they said, parents would have to take their daughters home again, and then would be seen what fuss had been

made for nothing. Others went still farther, and that humble asylum of innocence, humility, and angelic purity was branded with the most abominable calumnies.[1]

At first the holy Bishop bore these attacks with his usual meekness; but as he feared they would injure his enterprise, he took up his pen, and, ignoring the calumnies against himself, for he left to God the care of justifying him, he wrote admirable pages in defence of pious Congregations. He first replied to those who blamed him for establishing a Congregation of women. He proved that though man has received from God authority over woman, she is, nevertheless, equal to man in every other respect, above all in the participation of grace and eternal happiness; that though, by Eve's transgression, she was degraded and humbled, yet God raised her up again by deigning to be born of her in the person of the incomparable Virgin Mary; that He honored her in a particular manner in Magdalene, in Martha, and in the other holy women whom He allowed to accompany Him during His mortal life to supply His wants, to watch with Him during His agony, and to bury Him after His death; that Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the pastors of the Church have always taken particular care of pious women, visiting them, hearing their confessions, and writing for them beautiful treatises on perfection; that St. Gregory the Great, who watched over nearly three thousand virgins in Rome, used to say that, were it not for them, he believed Rome would not have been able to resist the attacks of the Lombards; and that St. Gregory Nazianzen called them the light and honor of Christianity, declaring that his heart throbbed with joy at beholding those pure and beautiful stars shining in the firmament of the Church. With regard to the mitigated form of inclosure then observed in the Institute, and which was criticised as not being strict enough, since it did not prevent the Sisters from going out to visit the poor, the holy Bishop humbly answered that there were many ranks in God's household; that the height and dignity of some did not interfere with the usefulness of the lowest; that simple, humble Con-

[1] *Recueil . . . par notre très honorée Marie-Adrienne Fichet*, etc. Manuscript *Fondation* of Annecy, p. 19.—*Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 128.

gregations ought never to place themselves on an equality with Religious Orders, nor should Religious Orders despise those little Congregations; and, finally, that God, who inspires the eagles to build their solitary eyry upon the summits of inaccessible rocks, has also given to little birds the instinct to build their nests in the bushes and the valleys. To what was said of the danger of not making solemn vows,—for there were only simple vows in the Visitation at that time,—the saint replied that every kind of life had its inconveniences; that solitude often produced melancholy, and conversation engendered distraction; that knowledge was frequently followed by vanity, and ignorance by obstinacy; that poverty in monasteries of women often caused too great solicitude, and that riches sometimes opened the door to ostentation and relaxation. "In winter," he said, "bees keep strict inclosure, and they are subject to sedition and kill one another; but in summer, when they fly about, they often lose themselves. If walking tires us, rest makes us stiff; and, in a word, my dearest Sisters, if the spirit of piety reign in our Institute, it will suffice to your lowliness to make good servants of God; for where piety does not reign, the strictest inclosure in the world will not unite the soul with God. Truly, eternal life alone is free from inconvenience." [1]

Doubtless, these beautiful remarks did not put an end to calumny nor did they silence critics. They did, however, check the audacity of the malevolent; they disabused a number of well-meaning individuals who repeated the censures without examining into their cause; and they procured a rest for the new Congregation.

A striking fact which, during several months, excited great interest in the little city also contributed to appease the storm of opposition. There was at Annecy a very pious lady, the Baroness de Bonvillars, who had been for many years afflicted with general paralysis, which prevented her leaving the house. "Alas!" she would sometimes say to Governor de la Roche, Sister de la Roche's father, "of what

[1] This beautiful treatise was never printed, and we fear it is lost; for, so far, our search for it has been unsuccessful. The analysis we have given of it is drawn from the unpublished History of the Foundation of Annecy, p. 20.

use is all my wealth to me, since I am deprived of the happiness enjoyed by the poor of being visited by Mother de Chantal and her daughters!" Her words being repeated to St. Francis de Sales, he wrote to the sick lady promising her the much-desired visit. St. Chantal and Sister Favre went to fulfil the Bishop's promise. When the Baroness de Bonvillars beheld the saintly Foundress, she exclaimed: "This is the first consolation I have had since my great sufferings have confined me to my room; and it seems to me," she added with fervent faith, "that Our Lord has come with His holy servants to visit me." From that day Mother de Chantal and the Sisters visited her faithfully, and their presence was so great a comfort to her that she resolved to make them her heirs. She never alluded to her intention but once. As she was bidding them good-bye one day, she said: "I hope all will be convinced some day of the respect and affection I bear the Blessed Virgin and her children." Mother de Chantal did not understand the drift of these words, and great was her surprise when, after the death of the virtuous lady, they came to notify the Sisters that the duty of burying the Baroness de Bonvillars devolved upon them, as her will was in their favor.

The funeral was hardly over before the relatives of the deceased lady began to take steps to annul the will. St. Francis de Sales saw at once that a lawsuit would ensue. Although he knew that the Sister's cause was good, even according to the testimony of President Favre, he was unwilling for his "bees to dispute the goods of this world with the thrifty ants, and so he ordered the convent to yield its claim." They did so, but continued to have a Mass said every Saturday for the deceased, as she had requested in her will. This example of disinterestedness, so much the more striking as the convent was then in a state of absolute want, made a great impression upon the people of Annecy.

If some found fault with the new Congregation, many others, among them the most pious and learned, applauded the undertaking and predicted its success. Père de Malachie solemnly declared that the Baroness de Chantal appeared to him in spirit as a sun filling the Church with its rays. In the opinion of Dom Sens de Sainte-Catherine, the illustrious

General of the Feuillants, the new Congregation was as high in love as it was low in humility, and he did not hesitate to call it the perfection of the age. "Oh," exclaimed Père de Villars, "blessed be the first stone of this edifice! How polished it is! The heart of this excellent widow, whose virtues I have esteemed so much and whose sanctity I now revere, is a clear and well-cut gem. . . . It seems to me," he added very justly, "that this Congregation was wanted in the Church, and we must believe that its blessed influence will be generally felt. For what was wanting to young virgins but this mitigated course? What was needed for widows but this mildness? What more could the robust and fervent desire than the mortification of such a life?" Many others spoke in the same manner, and predicted the spread of the new Congregation.[1] But in all these carefully preserved letters the new Institute is praised most for its mildness and humility, its life of recollection and fervent union with God. Of the service of the poor so heroically inaugurated by Mother de Chantal, we find not a word. Even souls the most pious were astonished and alarmed at this first appearance of the Daughters of Charity. They foresaw the difficulty of establishing a form of religious life so new and strange at that period, but so popular to-day.

Meantime the venerable Foundress heard of the death of her father-in-law. The old Baron died at Monthelon Castle, aged eighty-four, assisted by that Tertiary of St. Francis to whom, on leaving Burgundy, Mother de Chantal had confided the care of the old man's salvation, and who, having never quitted him, had prevailed upon him at the last hour to repent of his scandalous life and make a Christian end. Somewhat consoled by these details, but anxious about her children's inheritance, Mother de Chantal thought with St. Francis de Sales that a second journey to Burgundy was absolutely necessary. Celse-Bénigne came to Annecy for his mother, whose joy at seeing him again may be readily conceived.

St. Francis de Sales, who had met him late in the evening

[1] *Fondation inédite d'Annecy*, p. 21. See the text in full of the letters of Dom Sens de Sainte-Catherine, Père de Villars, Père de Bonnivars, etc.

when he alighted from the coach, hurried him off early next morning to his mother with this charming note, whose pleasantry will be easily understood: "I think I shall be first to announce to you, my dearest daughter, the arrival of the well-beloved Celse-Bénigne. He came late yesterday evening, and we had hard work to keep him from going to see you in bed, where you all, undoubtedly, were. How vexed I am not to be able to witness the caresses he will receive from a mother insensible to all natural affection! I suppose they will be caresses fearfully mortified.—Ah! no, my dear daughter, be not so cruel. Show this poor young Celse-Bénigne that you are glad to see him. So great signs of the death of our natural passions must not be given all at once."

"Now, I shall go to see you, if I can, though not often; for in presence of an object so amiable we cannot well be insensible, for friendship descends more than it ascends. I shall content myself with not ceasing to cherish you as my daughter as much as you cherish him as your son, and I even challenge you to outdo me."

Celse-Bénigne passed some days at Annecy, took Françoise to Thorens to her sister Marie-Aimée; and everything being ready for their departure, he returned with his brother-in-law, the Baron de Thorens, to accompany his mother to Burgundy.

Our saint took with her Sister Marie-Péronne de Châtel, and reached Monthelon in safety toward the end of July, 1613. She was received by a demonstration which recalled that of 1610 and 1611. She found at the castle the miserable servant who had treated her so insolently for nine years, and who now stood trembling before her, expecting to be ignominiously driven out. But St. Chantal went straight up to her, embraced her, and addressed her so graciously that all present praised God. She even had the courage to invite the unhappy creature to dine with her, talked a long time with her about all that her father-in-law had done since her departure, and remembering only the services this servant had rendered the old Baron, she rewarded her liberally. But, though deeply humbled, the old servant still retained some airs of authority, which roused the indignation of the young Baron de Thorens. "Oh," said the saint,

smiling, "patience! That is nothing at all. I saw more than that in my father-in-law's lifetime."

The affairs of the deceased were in a very bad state, rents having been allowed to run on for several years. Tact, intelligence, and time were now necessary to verify accounts and restore them to order. Every morning after Mass Mother de Chantal went down into the large hall of the castle, and there, in the midst of peasants and papers, she remained for entire hours, dignified, mild, and firm, never getting perplexed or angry, never raising her voice, as has been attested by a number of eye-witnesses. There was one peasant more audacious than his fellows, whose very insolence served to throw a brighter light upon the wisdom and moderation of our saint. As he was a great friend of the servant-woman above mentioned, she had, when holding sway in the castle, promised to have him credited in the book of accounts for all that stood against him, though he had not paid a cent. When his turn came, and he was convicted of having paid nothing, for the woman had forgotten to keep her promise, he became furious against Mother de Chantal and accused her of tearing a leaf out of the book. The young Baron de Thorens, indignant at such audacity, raised his cane to chastise him. "O my son," exclaimed the saint, seizing his arm, "God pardons us so much!" Then graciously approaching the angry peasant, she laid her hand on his head, and made the sign of the Cross on his forehead, saying, "Come, my friend, a little honesty!" In an instant he was completely changed. Falling upon his knees, he acknowledged his guilt and begged pardon and mercy, which were generously accorded him.

Mother de Chantal cancelled the debts of several farmers who, having neglected to pay their rent for years, now found it impossible to do so. In all this settling of accounts she never named herself. "You owe my children so much," she would say, or: "To-morrow we shall go to Bourbilly, my son's estate." She was as one dead returned to earth, to superintend the division of her property. She examined the title-deeds of her children's castles and estates, verified the contracts and books, and satisfied herself that everything was in good order. She often went on horseback

from Monthelon to Bourbilly in one day, although it is a ride of ten or twelve hours. In fact, it was hard to say which excited more admiration, her activity or her prudence.

As Celse-Bénigne was still very young and would not live at Bourbilly for some years yet, she had part of the furniture that might be injured by storing away sold, and left only a few rooms furnished. She did the same at Monthelon Castle, the portion of Françoise. In short, she did not quit Burgundy until the affairs of her children had been perfectly regulated, the accounts balanced, the debts paid, and the domains of Bourbilly, Monthelon, Totes, etc., provided with intelligent stewards. Until the majority of her children, moreover, she annually required an exact account of the receipts and debts, and from her convent watched so intelligently over their interests that their income was doubled in a few years.

This visit to Burgundy took only six weeks in all. She had left Annecy toward the end of June, and in the middle of August she was again with her Community. But the rapidity of the journey, the fatigue she had undergone, and, above all, the excessive heat, so hard upon a person of her sanguine temperament, brought on a fever which, though slight at first, soon endangered her life. St. Francis de Sales went to see her, and finding her so near death, directed the curé of Sainte-Maurice to bring the relics of St. Blaise. The Bishop prayed for some moments, and then applied to her the relics. She was instantly cured. Sister Fichet remarked in an undertone: "Indeed, it was not necessary to go all the way to Armenia after a saint of the fourth century. His Lordship could have cured our Mother without applying to her these relics." The saint overheard her. The color mounted to his face and tears started to his eyes. He reproved her severely, and imposed upon her as penance to ask the holy martyr's pardon, and for three years to fast on the eve of his feast.

The holy Founders now began to think of building a convent. The new house, though larger than the *Gallery*, was still too small. Besides, it was a private dwelling, not a convent. As the idea of a God created the Church, the idea of the religious life, so general and so well understood in

the Middle Ages, created the monastery. It is an edifice distinct from all others. None other, from a cottage to a palace, can supply its place. Its location is chosen according to laws invariable, though special for each Order; the plan is traced in accordance with conceptions deeply symbolical; and its walls rise in the midst of prayer. Silence guards its portals, and creates in the middle of the most bustling cities solitudes of whose peace the world never dreams.

But, before laying the foundation-stone of a convent for women, it was not forgotten, in those olden times, when laws were so often ineffectual, to choose for it a protector. It was some pious and powerful nobleman to whose honor the guardianship of this home of virgins was confided. In exchange for his protection, the religious bound themselves to pray daily for him whose sword insured them peace. His wife and daughters had cells in the convent, to which they withdrew to make retreats or escape from the dissipation of castle or court. After death, the remains of the noble protector, his wife, sons, and daughters, were laid under the flagstones of the choir, and they were prayed for to perpetuity.

These old traditions being still alive in the seventeenth century, St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal resolved to write to Her Royal Highness, Marguerite, Infanta of Savoy and widow of the Duke of Mantua, and supplicate her to accept the title of Protectress of their new Congregation, and to deign to acknowledge herself its mistress, patroness, and mother, "in order," they added, "that under the shadow of your name and by the favor of your charity, it may tranquilly attend to heavenly things, having nothing to trouble it either from within or without." [1]

The Duchess of Mantua and her father, the Duke of Savoy, to whom they had also written, replied to the holy Founders in terms replete with piety and kindness. They esteemed themselves happy, they wrote, at being able to participate in a work so agreeable to God, and they earnestly recom-

[1] Letter of St. Francis de Sales, September 18, 1613. In the Blaise edition this letter bears date of September 18, 1614, but this is a mistake.

mended themselves to the devout prayers of the two saints.[1] Charles Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy, immediately sent an official letter, dated May 17, 1614, to the Senate, in which he spoke of the new Congregation in the most affectionate manner, and directed the Marquis de Lans to espouse its interests on every occasion.

The Duke's son, Henry of Savoy, Duke of Nemours and of Geneva, made over to St. Francis de Sales a piece of ground so much the more suitable for the convent, as it was contiguous to the house they had bought. It was a very large lot situated near the canal and irrigated by the waters of the lake. That the religious might freely enjoy the water, he allowed arcades and arbors to be built over the streams where they entered and left the inclosure. The Sisters were permitted to keep them closed, and no one was to pass through them without necessity. With Christian delicacy, he even foresaw how much the religious might be inconvenienced by bathers and promenaders in summer, and he prohibited their approach under the severest penalties. Finally, remembering the poverty of the Congregation, he devoted the revenue of his chapel at La Roche to their altar.

Divine Providence having thus prepared everything for the building of the convent, St. Francis de Sales appointed September 18, 1614, for the laying of the corner-stone. The Duchess of Mantua, whose right it was to lay the first stone of the house, not being able to make the journey, sent the Countess de Tournon in her place, commissioning her to present to the holy Foundress, for the new church, a beautiful large cross of crystal enriched with precious stones.

St. Francis de Sales officiated pontifically at the ceremony and blessed the foundation-stone, upon which he had had the following inscription engraved:

[1] Manuscript *Fondation* of Annecy. See the text of Charles Emmanuel's letters to St. Francis de Sales and the Venerable Mother de Chantal, dated December 22, 1613, as well as the letter of the Infanta Marguerite to Mother de Chantal.

D. O M.

JESU CHRISTO
SANCTISSIMÆ MARIÆ VIRGINI VISITANTI
CAROLO EMMANUELE SABAUDIÆ, HENRICO GEBENNENSIS DUCIBUS
ANNO MILLESIMO SEXCENTESIMO DECIMO QUARTO
DECIMA OCTAVA SEPTEMBRIS
MARGARIDE INFANTE SABAUDIÆ, VIDUA DUCIS MANTUÆ, PROTECTRICE
FRANCISCO EPISCOPO
CONGREGATIONI SORORUM OBLATORUM VISITATIONIS DEVOTIONIS
SACRUM.[1]

The protection of this illustrious family did not, however, remove every obstacle. In order to extend the building sufficiently, the holy Founders had need of a garden adjoining their house. But the most advantageous terms were met by an obstinate refusal on the part of the proprietors. "Our daughters of the Visitation," wrote St. Francis de Sales, "will build with inconvenience, but they will do so very willingly; indeed, I may say that they will be very well satisfied, since they can do no better. They know, too, that it

[1] The following is St. Francis de Sales' own translation of the above :

A Dieu très-bon et très-grand, à Jésus-Christ et à sa très-sainte Mère, sous le titre de la Visitation.

Pendant le règne de Charles-Emmanuel duc de Savoie, Henri de Savoie étant duc de Nemours et de Genevois, l'an mil six cent quatorze, le dix-huitième jour du mois de Septembre, sous la protection de Marguerite infante de Savoie, veuve du duc de Mantoue, et sous l'épiscopat de monseigneur François, présent et officiant à cette cérémonie, a été posée et bénie cette première pierre, monument consacré à la dévotion de la congrégation des sœurs oblates de la Visitation.

The same in English :

To the most high and omnipotent God, to Jesus Christ, and to His most holy Mother, under the title of the Visitation.

During the reign of Charles Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy, Henry of Savoy being Duke of Nemours and of Geneva, in the year one thousand six hundred and fourteen, on the eighteenth day of the month of September, under the protection of Marguerite, Infanta of Savoy, widow of the Duke of Mantua, and under the episcopacy of His Lordship Francis, who was present and performed the ceremony, this foundation-stone was laid and blessed, as a monument consecrated to the devotion of the Congregation of the Oblate Sisters of the Visitation.

is but reasonable that the spouses of Him who never had a home or a place whereon to lay His head in this world should not be lodged to suit themselves. As you are aware, my dear Father, the Mother who governs this little flock has so well learned to abide on Mt. Calvary, that any other earthly dwelling seems to her far too fine. She does not, consequently, feel the refusal, for she knows that the pilgrims who are to be sheltered in this house, having to dwell there only during the night of this short life, will be, with God's assistance, so attentive to hasten on toward the beautiful sojourn of their eternal city, that all else will be a matter of indifference to them; and in fine, my dearest Father, we are the children of Divine Providence. God will take care of His servants according to His good pleasure. We must have patience. *Qui seminant in lacrymis, in exultatione metent.* Rose-bushes produce first the thorns, then the roses."[1]

This charming meekness should have disarmed the most violent opposition. But the greater the condescension of the holy Founders, the more did the insolence of their enemies increase. Some of the townspeople, furious at seeing arise the walls of a convent, resolved to use every possible means to hinder the building. They stoned the workmen, hid their tools, scattered their materials, and even hired men to loosen the dikes of the canal at night, so as to inundate the foundation. One day St. Francis de Sales was hastily notified that a man, armed with an axe, was destroying the cofferdam that the humidity of the soil had obliged them to construct. The Bishop hurried to the spot, but, seeing that his presence did not intimidate the man, with his incomparable mildness, neither changing countenance nor raising his voice, he said to him three times: "My friend, stop, I beg you." Finding that no attention was paid to his words, he gently took the axe from his hand and, assuming a stern, countenance in which majestic authority was blended with sweetness, he severely reproved him, giving him to understand that if he was ignorant of a Bishop's power he should learn it by experience. The man trembled before the saint,

[1] *Fondation manuscrite d'Annecy*, p. 26.

As he was withdrawing in confusion, one of the Bishop's almoners called out to him: "Come to Sales for letters of recommendation. We will give them to you." "Yes, yes," rejoined St. Francis de Sales quickly, turning to the priest, "he shall have them whenever he deserves them. Monsieur N——, have you forgotten the maxims of the school of Jesus Christ?"

The saint then returned to the convent parlor where Mother de Chantal was awaiting him. He acknowledged to her that this affair had troubled him, that he had been obliged to take his heart in both hands, by the reins as it were, to prevent its yielding to any other impulse than that of justice. All were filled with admiration at his words, for this action of the saintly prelate displayed at once meekness and dignity, mildness and firmness.

The unfortunate man, as is common with the guilty, excused himself by accusing St. Francis de Sales, and published everywhere that the saint had fallen into a violent passion. He told it even to a priest, a great friend of the holy Bishop. "Really, I laughed very heartily," wrote the saint, "when I read at the end of your letter that they had told you I fell into a passion; and you add: 'Do not hide the truth from your son, who is perplexed about the matter.' O my son, if he who gave you the account of my anger had not been more angry than I, you would not be worried about this miserable Father of yours. But I entreat you, when he comes again, embrace him for me, and give him a double alms; for I confess that he is not entirely wrong. I am a weak man, subject to passion; but, thank God, never since I have been a shepherd have I said an angry word to my sheep. . . . I felt provoked, it is true, but I restrained my feelings, and I acknowledged my weakness to our dear Mother, who, no more than I, uttered an angry word on the occasion. And, moreover, it seems to me that those good people take pleasure in inflicting upon her frequent mortifications, for which she is insatiable. But tell me, my dear brother, what harm have we done this good man? Alas! neither our Mother nor I have any other design than to erect a modest little hive, conformable to our plan, for our poor bees, who are thinking but of gathering honey upon the

sacred and heavenly hills, and not of the size or beauty of their hive. It is true that when I behold our Mother and her daughters: *Gratias ago ei qui me confortavit in Christo Jesu Domino nostro.* I return immense thanks to Him who hath strengthened me in Jesus Christ my Saviour." [1]

In spite of all obstacles, the building was gradually completed. The chapel was dedicated toward the close of the year 1614; and at the opening of 1615 the Sisters were installed in their new house. The Community consisted at that time of twenty-six members, eighteen of whom were professed.

The first-built of all the convents of the Order, for ten years directed by St. Francis de Sales, and for twenty-nine by St. Chantal, having had the happiness of possessing after their death the relics of the two saints, a happiness that it still enjoys, the first convent of Annecy has exercised considerable influence in the Order. Although holding no authority over the other houses, as we shall see later on, it has been, if not their head, at least their heart, their centre, their bond of union. They have given it a name which perfectly defines its position in the Order, as also its sweet and amiable influence, namely, that of the *holy source.* Whenever a difficulty in the interpretation of the Rules and Customs arises, recourse is had to Annecy in the belief that it is the surest depository of the words and teachings of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal; but, above all, in the conviction that the spirit of the holy Founders hovers over their sacred remains. This first convent of Annecy, by its wisdom, understanding, and fervor, has always justified the confidence placed in it by the Order. It has never aspired to any authority over the other houses, though neither has it ever been indifferent to the general interests of the Institute. On several occasions it has most wisely and most successfully taken the initiative; as, for example, at the time of the canonization of St. Chantal and, later, when her writings were being published, and alterations made in her letters by the Jansenists. It is to the spirit of wisdom, moderation, and humility, on the one side, and, on the other, to that

[1] *Fondation inédite* of the first convent of Annecy, p. 27.

of meekness and union, to fidelity to the memory of the holy Founders, that the Order of the Visitation owes the happiness of having presented to the world the admirable spectacle of an Order spread throughout all countries, having neither Superior-General, nor Visitors, nor Annual Chapters, and yet remaining perfectly united. It has passed through three centuries,—and such centuries !—without need of reform. It has preserved in far-off houses so great conformity in ideas, customs, rules, and ways of acting and thinking, as to transcend, we think, anything of the kind in the history of the Church.

CHAPTER XVI.

FOUNDATION OF THE SECOND CONVENT OF THE VISITATION AT LYONS.—ST. FRANCIS DE SALES MODIFIES HIS PLANS.[1]

1615—1616.

The Sisters had not long been installed in their new convent in Annecy, when there stopped at the door one morning a carriage from which four or five French ladies alighted. One might be easily recognized as a religious of the Paraclete. The others wore the black dress, narrow ruffles, small pectoral cross, and the handkerchief tied around the head, which distinguished widows at the close of the sixteenth and the opening of the seventeenth century. The countenance of the travellers corresponded to their costume. Piety and modesty beamed upon them. The religious received them with that cordiality which was beginning to distinguish the Sisters of the Visitation; but no one, not even Mother de Chantal, suspected the influence that these unpretending travellers were to exert upon the rising Congregation.

She who wore the religious dress was Madame de Gouffier, belonging to one of the most illustrious families of Saintonge. Pledged against her will to an Order on the decline, she was sighing for a reform, though without the courage to accomplish it, when the "*Introduction to the Devout Life*" fell into her hands. Charmed with its spirit, she inquired about its author and, learning that he was a holy Bishop of Savoy, and that he had recently founded a Religious Order, to which he had communicated a spirit still more excellent, she wrote to beg permission to visit his convent at Annecy.

[1] Nearly all the documents from which this very important chapter is drawn are unpublished. The principal are: 1st. *La Fondation du*

The saint replied that, since she aspired to naught but the imitation of the Cross, of the obedience and humility of the Saviour, she might come; but that she must know beforehand that the house into which she would be received was that of a little Congregation, still badly lodged, and in which everything was mean, humble, and abject, except the aim of those who lived in it, which was nothing less than to attain the perfection of divine love.[1]

On receipt of this reply, Madame de Gouffier started for Annecy. In Lyons she met a lady of eminent virtue, Madame d'Auxerre, widow of a lieutenant-general of the bailiwick of Forez. She introduced her to Madame Chaudon, who lived with her, and whom she loved as her own child. Madame Chaudon had been married several years, when her husband expressing his desire to become a Capuchin, she returned to the house of Madame d'Auxerre, there to live a life of prayer and seclusion until God would make known to her the Religious Order into which He willed her to enter. Holy souls seek and find one another even in the midst of the world. The other lady was a young widow named Elizabeth Colin, whom Almighty God had favored with a most wonderful gift of prayer. She wanted to become a religious. One day she saw in prayer a troop of

second Monastère de la Visitation Sainte-Marie en la Ville de Lyon, établi le 2 fevrier 1615. The writer is Mother de Chaugy, and the original manuscript is in the archives of Annecy. 2d. Two *mémoires*, one entitled *Mémoire de Denys de Marquemont, Archevêque de Lyon, sur les Inconvénients de laisser la Visitation en Forme de Simple Congrégation.* The title of the other is: *Réponse de Monseigneur l'Évêque de Genève à un Mémoire à lui presenté par Denys de Marquemont sur les Changements à faire à la Congregation de la Visitation.* There are two copies of the first *mémoire.* One is preserved at the Visitation of Annecy; the other, entirely in St. Chantal's handwriting, at the Visitation of Turin. As to St. Francis de Sales' answer, the Visitation of Annecy has a very old copy of it, although not in the saint's own writing. 3d. *Vie de Madame d'Auxerre, Fondatrice et première Novice du Monastère de Lyon.* (Her name in religion was Sister Marie-Renée Trunel.) This Life, also from the pen of Mother de Chaugy, is in the *Vies des Veuves*, lately published by Charles d'Héricault; Paris, Gaume, 1860, one vol. 12mo.

[1] Unpublished note written by St. Francis de Sales, and found in the manuscript *Fondation de Lyon*, p. 53.

religious belonging to a new Order, the habit of which she was to take; but so far she had been unable to discover it.

Madame de Gouffier told her new friends of the Congregation established by St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal, and they determined to go together to Annecy, "to spy holily whether it was the land that God wished to give them." [1]

St. Chantal received them with such kindness and affability as completely charmed them. She showed them the whole house, explained the order of exercises, and introduced them to the Sisters, whose gentleness, modesty, and humility they could not sufficiently admire. It was the moment in which, according to the charming expression of the old *Mémoires*, "those faithful spouses, having entreated their Beloved to come into their little new garden to see their aromatics, that Divine Spouse was culling a flower from it, withdrawing to Himself one of the youngest Sisters, Claude-Françoise Roget, scarcely eighteen years old." [2] The strangers saw this happy dying Sister on her bed of pain, cheerful and gracious, playing, as it were, with death, and sighing only for eternity, which she saw so near. Madame d'Auxerre could not take her eyes off her, and she felt more and more determined to enter a Community in which it was so sweet to die. Her three companions shared her sentiments. On seeing Mother de Chantal accompanied by her daughters, Madame Colin suddenly remembered the troop of nuns she had seen in her dream, and she promised God to consecrate herself to His service in the new Institute. Madame d'Auxerre, also, understood now why she had vainly studied the Rules of various Orders, visited so many convents, and witnessed innumerable instances of self-devotedness, but without being affected by them. "It was," she used to say, "because Almighty God destined me to bear His sweet and gentle yoke in His dear Visitation, where I find the flowers of Thabor and the thorns of Calvary." [3]

St. Francis de Sales visited them daily, talked with them about their spiritual needs, their future, their vocation, and

[1] *Vie de Madame d'Auxerre.*
[2] *Fondation manuscrite d'Annecy*, p. 24.
[3] *Vie de Madame d'Auxerre.*

holily anxious for the perfection of his work, he delighted in drawing from them an account of their impressions of what they saw. We shall here cite one instance of his amiable condescension. Having one day asked Madame Colin whether Madame de Gouffier had found nothing in the Institute repugnant to her taste, she answered simply that her friend thought it very hard for the Sisters to be obliged to use earthenware plates and wooden spoons. The saint, who made himself all to all, although he loved that primitive poverty, sympathized with Madame de Gouffier's repugnance, and inserted in the Rule that the Sisters might have silver spoons, "and this for greater cleanliness, as well as in imitation of blessed St. Augustine, who used this, but no other kind of plate." He substituted also pewter plates for those of earthenware. But with regard to sugar, whose absence Madame de Gouffier regretted in the milk and rice, he would permit it only when ordered by the physician.

After twelve days spent at Annecy, these ladies, with the exception of Madame de Gouffier, returned to Lyons. She could not bring herself to leave the house; and, in fact, a short time after she received the novices' habit. The three others, who, though cherishing the same desire, were not so free to act, returned to Lyons firmly resolved to do all in their power to establish there a second convent of the Visitation. They no sooner reached the city than Madame d'Auxerre bought a house in Rue Griffon, and, with the pecuniary assistance of her two friends and even of His Lordship, Denys de Marquemont, Archbishop of Lyons, she succeeded in furnishing it almost precisely like the house at Annecy. Nothing remained but to write to St. Francis de Sales and beg him to send some Sisters to begin the foundation, when unexpected obstacles arose. Men possessed of great influence in Lyons, and who enjoyed the Archbishop's confidence, began openly to ask whether Almighty God worked wonders only through the Bishop of Geneva; whether other Bishops could not establish Congregations as perfect and as well regulated as that of Annecy; whether Madame d'Auxerre, a woman so distinguished for virtue, was not capable of doing in France what Madame de Chantal was accomplishing in Savoy. These and a thousand other

similar suggestions were, like everything that flatters self-love, too favorably received. In consequence, and without further examination, it was decided that, as the Bishop of Geneva had established a Congregation of the Visitation at Annecy, Mgr. de Marquemont would establish a Congregation of the Presentation at Lyons. They set to work immediately at drawing up the Constitutions, the task being intrusted to the very person who had been the most determined in his opposition to the Visitation. When finished, they were presented to Cardinal de Marquemont for approval and forwarded to Paris, where the high patronage by which the parties concerned were favored gave every reason to hope that letters patent for the establishment of the new Congregation would soon be granted. Madame d'Auxerre and her companions put on a religious habit of the color "*minime*." "It was not," is the pleasantly malicious remark of the old *Mémoires*, "the color of him who was leading the new Sisters." The establishment was made with great pomp and an immense concourse of people, attracted as much by the novelty of the occasion as by Madame d'Auxerre's extraordinary reputation for virtue.[1]

In the foundation of a Religious Order the greatest difficulty lies not in designing the style of habit, not in compiling Rules, not in gathering members, not in erecting a suitable building,—the most serious question is how to infuse into it the spirit of union. The Institute of the Presentation had been founded only a few months when, dragged hither and thither, split into parties, it expired in division. Good Madame d'Auxerre and her two companions, who had consented, in obedience to the Archbishop of Lyons, to head the new Institute, were consumed with sorrow. They struck their breast, convinced that it was a punishment of their own conduct. Whilst matters were in this state, Madame de Gouffier, who, on the point of engaging herself definitively in the Order of the Visitation, was returning to her Abbey of the Paraclete to arrange her affairs, passed through Lyons and went to see her old friends. Madame

[1] *Fondation manuscrite du second Monastère de la Visitation à Lyon*, p. 56.

d'Auxerre related to her with tears the fault she had committed and the remorse she had ever since felt for it, a remorse daily increased by the disunion in her Community. She begged Madame de Gouffier to write to St. Francis de Sales, entreating him to forgive her and to send some Sisters to Lyons. At the same time she went with her companions to cast herself at the feet of the Archbishop, bathe them with her tears, and entreat him to allow them to invite to Lyons the new Congregation which Our Lord was so visibly blessing at Annecy, since their own was evidently a failure. Cardinal de Marquemont consented and even promised to write to the servant of God, "his good and very dear confrère," which he actually did in the most pressing terms.

Meantime, a most remarkable event enlightened those that had "eyes to see." The letters patent petitioned for by the Archbishop of Lyons for the new Institute of the Presentation arrived; but great was the astonishment of all to see in the letters and in all the papers, even in those addressed by the prelate himself to the King, the words *Congregation of the Visitation*, in distinct and well-formed characters, wherever the words *Congregation of the Presentation* had been written. A general cry of surprise arose. "Truly," exclaimed even those that had been the most opposed to the Visitation, "the hand of God is at work for these religious!"

Why, indeed, would not God work for them? During all these untoward occurrences, St. Chantal had exhibited naught but meekness, patience, and humility. She esteemed herself unworthy of being employed in God's work. She was happy to see Him making choice of better instruments, she said, and, checking the impatience of some of the Sisters, she ceased not to remind them that it is better to multiply virtues than houses.

At last all obstacles were removed, and, in reply to the letters received from Cardinal de Marquemont, St. Francis de Sales directed St. Chantal to go to Lyons for the foundation. He sent with her Sisters Marie-Jacqueline Favre, Marie-Péronne de Châtel, Marie-Aimée de Blonay, and Madame de Gouffier, who had taken the habit with the name of Sister Marie-Elizabeth. "For," he said, "as the undertaking is great, and as this is the first exodus from our

house, it is but proper to send the cream of our Congregation." [1]

M. Ménard, Vicar-General of the archdiocese of Lyons, went to Annecy with a carriage to conduct the Sisters to their new home. St. Francis de Sales accompanied them beyond the city limits, blessing them with words so affecting that all melted into tears. His heart impelled him some days after to write Mother de Chantal a letter in which he again poured out upon them a thousand benedictions.[2]

"I greet you, the best loved Mother in the world, a thousand and a thousand times, and I cease not to shed holy desires over you and for your flock. Ah! Lord, bless with Thy sacred hand the heart of my most amiable Mother, that it may, as a fruitful source, bring forth many hearts for Thee! Bless my first dear daughter Marie-Jacqueline (Favre), that she may be the lasting commencement of the joy of the Father and the Mother Thou hast given her. May the dear child Marie-Péronne (Châtel) prove a continually increasing consolation to the Congregation in which Thou hast planted her, therein long to blossom and bear abundant fruit! May the dear child Marie-Aimée (de Blonay) be loved by angels and by men, thus to attract many souls to the love of Thy Divine Majesty; and blessed be the heart of my dear child Marie-Elizabeth (de Gouffier), that it may be a heart of everlasting benediction!

"My very dear Mother, may blessing upon blessing and the crowning of all blessings be showered upon your heart! May you see your eldest daughter ever renewing her zeal, the second always increasing in virtue, the third always loving, the last always blessed, that the blessing of sacred love may ever grow and increase in your little circle! And, above all, may my dearest Mother's heart, as well as my own, be ever perfectly dissolved in the most holy love of Jesus." [3]

As Mother de Chantal had experienced special pain at separating from the saint, he wrote her in particular: "Now come, my dearest daughter, since God is the bond of

[1] Letter of St. Francis de Sales to M. de Blonay, January 2, 1615.
[2] Letter of February 4, 1615. [3] Letter of February 4, 1615.

our heart, who shall ever separate us? No! neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever separate us or disturb our union. Go, then, my dear child, with an undivided heart whither God calls us. . . . Go graciously and joyously. I am wherever you are. Oh, how happy are they who seek God with their whole heart, leaving all, even the Father He has given them, in order to follow His Divine Majesty!"[1] Some time after he again wrote: "What matters it whether you be here or there, for who can destroy our union, which is in God? In a word, it seems to me that henceforth our being in one place or in different places will not affect our spiritual union, since it exists everywhere, thanks to Him who has formed it. Let us be at peace in this assurance."[2]

The little band left Annecy January 25, 1615, and did not reach Lyons until the 1st of February. An act of extraordinary obedience immortalized this journey. They had arrived at the place in which they were to pass the night, and the Sisters were warming themselves around a blazing fire. In it lay a piece of red-hot iron. It suddenly occurred to M. Ménard to try the Sisters' obedience. "I have heard," he said to himself, "that they make extraordinary profession of obedience in Sainte-Marie. Fire shall test it." Then turning to Sister Marie-Péronne de Châtel, he said: "Sister, be kind enough to take that piece of iron out of the fire." Hardly had he ceased speaking before the command was executed. She had seized the red-hot iron almost before he perceived it. "Drop it, Sister, drop it!" he exclaimed hastily, "that will do!" And she, nothing disturbed, quietly replaced the iron in the fire. All thought her hand burned, but when they bade her open it, it bore no trace of fire.[3]

As they approached Lyons, Mother de Chantal felt that the angel of the kingdom was welcoming her, and she received interior certitude of the progress the Institute would make in France and the fruit it would bear.[4]

Great success did, indeed, await the Visitation in France.

[1] Letter of January 26, 1615. [2] Letter of May 13, 1615.
[3] *Vies des premières Religieuses*, etc., vol. i. p. 317.
[4] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 157.

Scarcely founded, still uncertain as to its plans, with neither Rules nor Constitutions, nor even a clearly defined end, it was in France to take definitive form. It is worthy of note that nearly all Religious Orders developed and spread throughout the world only after having touched French soil! St. Benedict lived and died in Italy; but his first and most illustrious disciple, St. Maur, hastened to establish himself in France. St. Columban from Ireland, St. Bruno from the borders of the Rhine, St. Norbert from Germany, St. Dominic from Castile, St. Ignatius from Pampeluna,—all foreigners, all mysteriously led into France, either because God, having predestined that nation to be the "Eldest Daughter of the Church," wished to reserve for her the honor of lending a hand to all great Catholic works, or because French genius, with its light and warmth, was more proper than that of any other nation to impart to those works that character of simplicity, splendor, grandeur, and grace, which triumphs over all minds and wins all hearts.

Madame d'Auxerre joyfully welcomed Mother de Chantal and her companions, and at once resigned her authority into the saint's hands. Next day, Feast of the Purification, February 2, 1615, M. Ménard celebrated solemn Mass at the new convent, and, in the name of the Archbishop, then absent from Lyons, declared it, to the great satisfaction of the whole city, canonically established. A considerable number assisted at the ceremony. On the same day, Madame d'Auxerre and her two companions took the novice's habit, and "from that moment," says the Venerable Mother de Chantal, "we went on in our usual routine of exercises, joyfully and peaceably, and with the blessing of God."

Madame d'Auxerre had endowed the house with "ten thousand livres in funds, thus securing a revenue of five hundred livres." This was very little compared with the expenses of the new establishment. In fact, Mother de Chantal says, "We were soon reduced to a state bordering on beggary. But this did not sadden us, for our heart and our confidence were in God."

Almighty God was no more wanting to the rising Visitation of Lyons than He had been to that of Annecy. One day, when the Sisters knew not where to look for help, just

as they were going to Vespers, a poorly-clad man came to the door, and asked to see Mother de Chantal. He placed in her hand a roll of money wrapped in a piece of soiled paper, saying: "Pray for him who sends you this." She went to Vespers without opening the roll, thinking that it contained but a few testoons.[1] It was not until after the Office, in the midst of all the Sisters, that she unfolded the paper and found in it "eighty gold crowns." Another day, the Sisters were talking in recreation of their desire to have a beautiful ostensorium for the Sacred Host. Mother de Chantal laughed, and said that as soon as she was rich she would buy a silver one. Just then a man rang the bell and, refusing to tell his name, handed in a very beautiful ostensorium.[2]

Meanwhile difficulties of a more serious nature were beginning to preoccupy and disquiet Mother de Chantal. In establishing his Institute, St. Francis de Sales had taken a step which at the present day appears very simple, but which at that period was a very bold proceeding: he had suppressed inclosure. Those religious who had hitherto been invisible to the world, who since the Bull of Boniface VIII. had been hidden behind impenetrable grates, the holy Bishop of Geneva had drawn from the cloister, and sent like mothers to the attics of the poor. The idea alarmed Cardinal de Marquemont. It was his opinion that, in Lyons and the other cities of France, these visits to the poor could not be safely continued, and that, moreover, a life so pure and interior ought not to remain a simple Congregation, but be raised to the dignity of a Religious Order, consequently, to strict inclosure; for the idea of a Religious Order of women without inclosure was quite foreign to his way of thinking. He forbade the Sisters to visit the poor, ordered them provisional inclosure, and as the title of Visitation lost its significance as soon as visiting the poor was discontinued, he expressed a desire that the house in Lyons should be thenceforward known as the Presentation.

Greatly annoyed at these changes, St. Chantal wrote im-

[1] The testoon was worth about twenty sous.

[2] Manuscript *Mémoires de la Fondation de Lyon*, p. 59.—*Vie de Madame d'Auxerre*, p. 39.—*Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 160.

mediately to St. Francis de Sales for advice. Cardinal de Marquemont also wrote to the Bishop, begging "to contract a holy friendship with him, in imitation of the early Bishops, who had but one heart and one soul, and who by reciprocal communication of the inspirations they received from Heaven assisted one another to bear their burdens." He promised, also, soon to visit Annecy, in order to expose to him his views.

The saintly Bishop of Geneva was too humble to wait for the promised visit, "the Archbishop of Lyons being," he said, "the first of the Bishops of France and I the last of Savoy;" so he started at once for Lyons. The two prelates conferred long together, but without coming to a conclusion. Cardinal de Marquemont would not hear of an Order of female religious without inclosure and obliged to visit the sick; and St. Francis de Sales, with all his admirable condescension, could with difficulty renounce a work which seemed to him to meet one of the greatest wants of the time.

But this difference of opinion did not interfere with the holy friendship of the two prelates. On July 2, 1615, both repaired to the Visitation, where Hiéronyme de Villette, a relative of St. Francis de Sales, was to take the habit. The Cardinal officiated solemnly, and St. Francis de Sales preached. During the sermon, with great ardor and countenance all on fire, he uttered the following very remarkable words: "Never would a person enter the Visitation of Holy Mary without having first received in her heart a visit from the Blessed Virgin." This sentiment remained so deeply engraven in the saint's mind that, wishing to transfer it to the hearts of his daughters and render it immortal, he wrote it in the Constitutions.[1]

Three months after, October 30, 1615, Cardinal de Marquemont returned St. Francis de Sales' visit. They again conferred at length on the subject of the new Order, its definite form, inclosure, and visiting the poor. But though witnessing with his own eyes the prodigies wrought by the convent in Annecy, the Archbishop was inflexible; and on his return

[1] Constitution XXXIII., On the Mistress of Novices.

to Lyons he continued to prohibit the Sisters from going out or visiting the sick.

To support and carry out his views, he drew up a very learned and, in certain points, a very remarkable *Mémoire*, hitherto unpublished, and of which our readers should know the leading ideas. It commences thus: "Monseigneur the Cardinal of Lyons has noticed in the Institute of the Congregation of the Visitation the following, which His Lordship the Bishop of Geneva is most humbly entreated to consider and, with his prudent, learned, and pious judgment, charitably to reflect upon, after which the whole is frankly submitted to his censure."

The Cardinal then proceeded to remark that the Visitation, being but a simple Congregation, was not approved by the Pope; that the vows, in whatsoever manner they might be made, could be none other than simple;[1] and that, consequently, the Sisters would never really be religious. All this appeared to him matter of regret both for the Sisters themselves, who would have the obligations and duties of the religious life without either its name, merit, perfection, or indulgences, as well as for their parents and families; for the vows being simple, if a Sister should after some years become disgusted, return to the world, and marry, the marriage would be valid. Thence, what shame and unhappiness for the daughter, what regret for the parents, what lawsuits and trouble in families! The Cardinal insisted upon this point, alleging the customs of France with regard to

[1] There is question here of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Now, these vows are of two kinds: simple and solemn. Simple vows are those made either in private or in public, but in a Congregation not approved by the Pope. If a person who has made simple vows marries, he commits a sacrilege, but the marriage is valid. Solemn vows are those taken in a Religious Order approved by the Pope. They involve not only the unlawfulness of acts opposed to them, as do simple vows, but also their invalidity. He who has made a solemn vow of poverty and of chastity can neither marry nor inherit: the marriage is invalid, the property he inherits does not belong to him. The solemnity of the vow, consequently, does not depend upon the will of him that makes the vow, nor upon the public ceremonies that accompany it, but only upon the will of the Church; and its essential effect is to make the acts opposed to the vows not only unlawful, but also invalid.

family inheritance, the Parliamentary laws, and, above all, the unwillingness of parents to allow their children to enter into simple Congregations. He concluded that, in order to place the Sisters in a more perfect state, convents and families in security, it would be necessary to convert the Congregation into a regular Order, which would involve the obligation of perpetual inclosure.

The Congregation once changed into an Order, he approved the idea of making it a place of retreat for the aged and infirm who did not feel called to the rigors of the austere Orders.[1] But he was opposed to the admission of widows whose temporal affairs were unsettled and who would, consequently, be obliged to go out from time to time to attend to them. Besides, looking upon this liberty as a formal infraction of the laws of the Church, which require nuns to live in perpetual inclosure, he found considerable inconvenience in it, particularly at that period and in France. The world would be scandalized; convents in which efforts were being made to re-establish inclosure would take advantage of it to persist in their relaxation; Protestants, who had everywhere torn down the grates and violated the inclosure of convents, would say that we, too, know how to get rid of such restraints; in fine, it would be a source of great distraction to the Sisters themselves. "This is not said," added the Cardinal, in allusion to Mother de Chantal and the first Sisters of the Visitation, "to find fault with those who, assisted by the Spirit of God and the direction of an angelic prelate, have so happily opened this career and gained for it universal admiration. But we must look to the future. We must think of the time when, this direction failing and the fervor of devotion cooling, things might go on less happily." After requiring strict inclosure and the consequent abolition of serving the sick, the Cardinal demanded that the title *Visitation* should be suppressed, as no longer being characteristic, and that it should be replaced by that of *Presentation.*

Such was the first and most important part of the *Mé-*

[1] Thus were called in ecclesiastical language, better known at that time than in our own day, the Religious Orders solemnly approved by the Pope.

moire. In the second, supposing the case that St. Francis de Sales would absolutely preserve to the Visitation the more humble form of Congregation, the Cardinal, being very doubtful as to whether the vows of obedience and poverty could be made in public and with ecclesiastical solemnity by the authority of the Ordinary, required, first, that the Sisters should make only the public vow of chastity; secondly, that in the Rules it should not be said that the Bishops could, according to necessity, do this or that, for this would be acting the Pope, and not the Bishop; thirdly, that it should never be permitted to leave the monastery for temporal matters, excepting during the novitiate, which, for this purpose, might be prolonged four or five years, until such temporal affairs were entirely settled; fourthly, that novices obliged to go out should never do so in the religious habit, and it would even be better not to change the dress during the novitiate. As to the professed Sisters, he required that they should never go out except in cases of absolute necessity; as, for instance, to make a foundation.

The Cardinal ended by saying that if they could not agree in their views, the Bishop of Geneva might direct the house at Annecy according to his pleasure, whilst he would do as he judged proper with that in Lyons; that he would regret very much being obliged to take such a stand, but that, if he were forced to make separate Rules, he had the example of some Bishops in Italy, who, even in the province of Milan, could come to no understanding on this subject either with their Archbishop or among themselves.[1]

Such were the reasons upon which Cardinal de Marquemont rested his demand that St. Francis de Sales should completely change the plan of his Institute. They seem to possess some solidity; but, in fact, they are very specious. The Congregation, so admirable and so successful, of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul was soon to contradict in the most striking manner the vain fears expressed in this *Mémoire*, and to prove evidently that there was less danger than the Cardinal imagined; and that there were, on the con-

[1] *Mémoire de Denys de Marquemont, Archevêque de Lyon, sur les Inconvénients de laisser la Visitation en Forme de simple Congrégation*, Manuscript, 4to, preserved in the Archives at Annecy.

trary, immense advantages to be reaped from the establishment for women of simple Congregations without inclosure, for the public ministry of charity. As to the disadvantages which he said would necessarily result from simple vows, what would the Cardinal have thought if it had been given him to see arise in the course of time, not only the Sisters of Charity, but the Christian Brothers, the Little Sisters of the Poor, the Oratorians, and that crowd of Congregations which, for three centuries, have made but simple vows, and which, nevertheless, embalm the Church with such a perfume of virtue as might excite the jealousy of Orders the most strictly cloistered? What would he have said, above all, if, looking into the future, he had seen those cloistered Orders themselves, the Dominicans, the Carmelites, and the Poor Clares, forced in France, by political revolutions, to make none but simple vows, and, under this modification, causing the Church no more embarrassment and offering to her no less virtue? But remark the influence of character over ideas, and of ideas over actions. Although very pious, Cardinal de Marquemont belonged to that class of timorous minds which reject all innovations, even the best, merely because they are innovations; which believe things should necessarily be done in this or that way to-day, because such was the order of yesterday; which do not understand that the Church, immutable in her dogmas, is not so in her Institutions; and which, tied down to the letter instead of soaring aloft by the spirit, would reduce the Church to a state of immobility, if God, who has formed her to walk at the head of nations, had not imparted to her the grace of activity at once mild and strong, allowing empires and individuals to follow her without ever being able to precede her.

St. Francis de Sales had no sooner read this *Mémoire* than he sent it to Mother de Chantal. She had just returned from Lyons, where she had left Mother Favre at the head of the Community. With a view, probably, to study it more thoroughly, St. Chantal took a copy of it. Cardinal de Marquemont's reasons affected her little. More confident in the lights of her saintly director than in those of a prelate who had so completely failed in the foundation of his own Institute of the Presentation, she wrote note after note

to St. Francis de Sales, entreating him to be firm, to change nothing in a plan already tested by experience and so visibly blessed by God. One of the notes relative to this matter must be quoted here, as illustrative of the firm and decided character of our saint. "My very dear Father," she wrote, "I have just been told that a man will start for Lyons to-morrow. I beg you, if you can, to write a word to the Archbishop of Lyons *in strong ink;* for it seems to me this affair is of so great importance to this house that it ought to be urged. My dearest Father will say that I am always eager. Oh, certainly, I should be heartily eager in this matter, if I could do any good." [1]

Cardinal Bellarmine shared St. Chantal's view of the matter. That learned and profound theologian, to whom St. Francis de Sales had written [2] to obtain through his intervention several favors from the Holy See for his new Congregation, and to whom he had in confidence related Cardinal de Marquemont's opposition, replied as follows: "I shall give you the same advice that I should adopt myself, were I in your place. I would leave these maidens and widows precisely as they are, and I would not change what has been well done. Before Boniface VIII. there were female religious both in the East and the West. We have the authority of the Holy Fathers for this, namely, among the Latins: St. Cyprian, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine; among the Greeks: St. Athanasius, St. Chrysostom, St. Basil, and several others. Now, these religious were not so shut up in their convents as not to go abroad when necessary. And Your Right Reverend Lordship is not ignorant of the fact, that simple vows are not less binding nor less meritorious before God than solemn ones,

[1] This note, preserved in the Archives of Annecy, has never before been published. The point in question was the Divine Office. As St. Francis de Sales was forming his Community of delicate or aged persons, he wished to impose upon them only the recitation of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin; but Cardinal de Marquemont, seeing in this a *dangerous innovation*, required that they should sing the Divine Office every day. This was manifestly irreconcilable with the end proposed by the holy Bishop of Geneva.

[2] Letter of July 10, 1616.

since the solemnity, as well as inclosure, dates only from the ecclesiastical decree of this same Pope.

"Even at the present day, the convent of noble ladies founded by St. Frances of Rome, and which is now flourishing wonderfully in Rome, furnishes us with an example of this ancient custom. They have neither inclosure nor solemn profession.

"If, then, in your country maidens and widows live as holily, if they can be as useful to seculars by their charity and good example without being shut up, or cloistered, I do not see why that manner of living should be changed. If, however, any one has better advice to give you, I willingly yield my opinion to his."[1]

No one saw more clearly than St. Francis de Sales the value of the great theologian's opinion, which was so soon to be adopted and acted upon by St. Vincent de Paul, and which Mother de Chantal supported with all the energy of conviction. The world had evidently reached one of those epochs in which society becomes transformed, and in which to meet new wants an abundant effusion of the old spirit under new forms is necessary. The Bishop of Geneva had found one of these forms, at once old and new, known to the early Church, forgotten since the pontificate of Boniface VIII., yet so wonderfully adapted to the needs of the age that, although again stifled as we shall see by the obstinate resistance of the Archbishop of Lyons, it delayed not to reappear. In spite of his great condescension, St. Francis de Sales did not yield without a struggle. He clung to his humble little Congregation without cloister, without solemn vows, living in humility and prayer, and pouring out its heart in works of charity. But, finally, the persistence of the Cardinal, the species of threat that terminated his *Mémoire*, and, on the other hand, the mild and condescending disposition of the saint, joined to the little confidence he had in his own lights, determined him, after long discussions of which we have no record, to make whatever concessions the Archbishop of Lyons desired. He wrote, then, in reply to

[1] This letter may be seen in the collection of St. Francis de Sales' letters. It is dated December 29, 1616.

that of Cardinal de Marquemont a *Mémoire* very remarkable in its way, but which has never been published. It reflects great honor on the mild and conciliatory spirit of the saint, as well as on his superior intelligence. It is in every way deserving of being better known than it is.

It begins thus: "His Lordship, the Archbishop of Lyons, is most respectfully entreated to receive these humble remonstrances upon the remarks it has pleased His Lordship to communicate to the Bishop of Geneva; and, after having read and considered them, he will please to employ his authority in the choice left him, in which the said Bishop of Geneva will acquiesce, not only humbly and reverently, as is his duty, but cordially and cheerfully in all suavity."

In the first place, St. Francis de Sales proved that his Community had been lawfully established; that he had founded it in his diocese without the anticipation of ever seeing it extend to other dioceses; that he had given it Rules, after the example of the Bishops of the province of Milan, the best disciplined province in Italy; that he had caused it to be spoken of to His Holiness, who had praised it and granted it blessings and indulgences; that, in a word, all the Rules of the new Community had been prescribed only because he had seen them practised in many Congregations and Confraternities of Rome and throughout Italy.

That this Congregation was not only lawful, but also useful to the glory of God, could not be doubted, the holy Bishop said, as it had been established in imitation of a large number of Congregations both new and old, many of them founded by saints, and all having produced saints and very great ones. Their members made only simple vows; they went out even in their religious dress without danger or scandal; if they returned to the world, they were looked upon as apostates, since they had violated their vows, but, nevertheless, they could contract valid marriage, as solemn vows alone involve invalidity of marriage.

As to the service of the sick, although not the primary end of the Institute, having been added rather as an exercise of devotion, it had been much liked from the very beginning, not only because it was of itself an act of piety very pleasing to God, but also because they who practised it were

always spiritually benefited by it, and because it excited an odor of great suavity among the people.

Nevertheless, thinking that the kind of life practised in the Visitation might be received in different parts of France for the salvation of souls and the promotion of God's glory if it were modified according to the Archbishop's desire, St. Francis de Sales, with all his heart, "without the least reluctance," agreed to its being established under the title of a simple Congregation, with the condition of perpetual inclosure according to the Decree of the Council of Trent. He added, that as in Rome, Italy, and almost everywhere, acting upon this mild and kind interpretation, girls are allowed to enter convents to be educated, he thought that ladies desirous of putting their conscience in order might be permitted to retire therein, since this necessity is very important, and the fruit of such entrances greater than words can express. He wished, moreover, that not only confessors and physicians should be allowed to enter, but even fathers and children, believing that this indulgence would be a source of great consolation to them, and that it could be practised without a shadow of danger, if things were properly conducted. As to widows who might be obliged to go out sometimes, he readily consented that they should wear a modest secular dress on those occasions.

But with regard to the name of the Congregation, he most humbly entreated the Archbishop to allow it to retain the title of Visitation, as it had been established at Annecy and sanctioned by the government of Savoy under this name, which also stood in the letters patent granted it by the Senate, in several deeds already closed, and in many other papers. He remarked, too, that the title of Visitation was very suitable, and that, provided they could agree upon things, names were of little importance. As to the formula of the vows, he left the Archbishop at liberty to arrange it according to his pleasure, although the one already drawn up was very like that used by the Congregations of the province of Milan, if his memory did not deceive him.

In fine, since it was evident that the Archbishop would be more fully satisfied if the Congregation were converted into a regular Order under St. Augustine's Rule, St. Francis

de Sales agreed to this change very freely and willingly, not only through the respect, honor, and veneration due to the superior intelligence of the Archbishop of Lyons, but also because, as the Archbishop of Paris had converted the simple Congregation of the Ursulines into a regular Order without changing its principal end, so this change could be made in the Visitation without interfering with its principal end, which is to receive the weak, the infirm, and the aged. In this case, continued the saint, no objection would be made by him, because he had no doubt that the form of a regular Order would be more honorable to the Congregation and a great relief to himself personally, as he would no longer be called upon to make apologies and explanations on the subject of the Visitation.

He ended by begging the Archbishop of Lyons to conclude the matter as soon as possible, as the Rules were asked for everywhere, and the Congregation desired in several places. He declared again that he was perfectly indifferent about the decision, and that he would cheerfully accept whatever choice His Eminence might be pleased to make.[1]

This *Mémoire* was accompanied by a letter, which ended with these words: "I repress my own desires, thinking only of God's providence. I am silent. I acquiesce in your judgment and yield to your advice." [2]

At the same time, in order to restrain the zeal of Mother Favre, then Superioress in Lyons, St. Francis de Sales wrote her an admirable letter. He represented to her that, if it was God's pleasure that the Congregation should change its name, rank, and employment, she ought to submit; provided God be served in the Institute, she should be satisfied; that this was the perfect and apostolic spirit; that even should the Visitation be the means of establishing other Congregations of holy women without ever establishing itself, it would thereby be only the more pleasing to God, for it would have less food for self-love. "With regard to the points proposed to me by the Archbishop," added the

[1] *Réponse de l'Évêque de Genève à un Mémoire à lui présenté par Denys de Marquemont sur les Changements à faire à la Congrégation de la Visitation.* (Archives of Annecy: manuscript, 4to.)

[2] Unpublished letter. (Archives of Annecy.)

saint, "and without which he is unwilling to establish our humble Congregation in his diocese, I leave the choice to him unreservedly. It is of very little consequence whether the good be done in this way or in that, although I felt a particular satisfaction in the title of simple Congregation, in which charity and fear of the Spouse alone would serve as inclosure. I agree, then," he wrote in conclusion, "to its becoming a religious Order. But, my dearest child, I speak to you with all the simplicity and confidence of my heart, I give this consent mildly, tranquilly, and with unparalleled suavity. Not only my will, but also my judgment, has been well satisfied to render the homage due to that of this great and worthy prelate."[1]

Thus were the plans of St. Francis de Sales changed. The religious, so much admired at Annecy when pressing through the streets, carrying bread, medicines, and clothes, and whom the poor called to their bedside, returned to the obscurity of their convent. Strict inclosure, impenetrable grates, hid them from all eyes, and their voices, which had consoled the dying hours of so many poor sufferers, were heard no longer save in the silence of the temple, at the foot of the holy altar. Shall we regret it? Has the work of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal lost by this change? Would it have proved more useful according to its original plan? It is, doubtless, an admirable thing to serve the poor and console the sick; but can they be served only by giving them bread and medicine? Those religious that, in the seclusion of their cloister, pray for the afflicted, humble themselves for the proud, immolate themselves for the sensual, and offer themselves as victims for the wants of the world,—shall they not be counted among the dearest and most devoted servants of the poor? Besides, is not God abandoned and forsaken like the poorest of His creatures? Why, then, should there not be souls consecrated to consoling Him, to compassionating His sufferings, to making Him forget by their prolonged adoration the indifference, ingratitude, and outrages of men? The world comprehends not these ideas; but are they on that account less true? Because it does not

[1] Letter of October, 1617.

please the world, shall the time-honored history of Martha and Mary be torn from the holy Gospels? The one, drawn by the humanity of Jesus Christ, hastened to prepare for Him bread, wine, a bed; the other, raised above earthly thoughts and seeing in Jesus Christ but the hidden God, seated herself at His feet in an ecstasy of love and adoration. Then, as now, the world admired the former; the latter, not understood, was censured. But Jesus Christ, reversing the judgment of the world, placed Mary above Martha, the service of prayer above that of corporal works of mercy, and the care of His suffering members below contemplation and the adoration of His divinity.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RULES AND THE SPIRIT OF THE VISITATION.—MOTHER DE CHANTAL PROVIDENTIALLY PREPARED FOR ITS FOUNDRESS.

1616—1617.

Were it announced to-day that the Little Sisters of the Poor were sending away their old people, were shutting themselves up in a cloister, were devoting themselves exclusively to prayer,—with what astonishment at first, then with what regret, and soon with what blame would not such a step be received! It was quite the contrary in the seventeenth century, still full of a keen sentiment of divine things, and which the utility of Martha's works had not yet caused to forget the sublimity of Mary's. When it became known that St. Chantal and her companions had, at last, consented to substitute for the service of the poor a life of prayer and perpetual adoration, there was a general outburst of enthusiasm. Letters of congratulation, petitions for foundations, poured in upon St. Francis de Sales from all parts. "The harvest is, indeed, very great," wrote the saint; "we must trust that God will send us laborers. Toulouse, Moulins, Riom, Montbrison, Rheims, all want our daughters of Holy Mary, and, strange to say! everywhere they want the Mother."

But he was in no hurry to respond to these petitions. On the one side, Mother de Chantal had returned from Lyons worn out with fatigue, and suffering from the first attacks of a languor that rendered her unfit for travelling and kept her in bed during the greater part of the years 1616 and 1617. On the other side, after having determined upon the general plan of his Institute, St. Francis de Sales was preparing to undertake the long and difficult task of drawing up the

Rules and Constitutions of the new Order. For this he stood in need of the lights and experience of St. Chantal, and to it he counted upon devoting the whole of the year 1616 and, perhaps, that of 1617. Besides, every day brought to the convent of Annecy numbers of young ladies, snatched from the world by the most extraordinary vocation, capable of the highest virtues, and who would soon be Foundresses and Superioresses of the first houses of the Order. They were still young, some of them novices, others professed only two or three years. St. Francis de Sales, not at all anxious to extend an Order the Rules of which were not even written, was desirous of employing some time in forming his young religious, impressing firmly upon their heart and mind the spirit of the Institute before exposing them to the risks and dangers of journeys and foundations.

We are already acquainted with the first generation of St. Chantal's spiritual children. The second resembles the first. It presents the same innocence, the same youth, the same virtue, the same worldly prospects courageously and joyously sacrificed for God.

Anne-Marie Rosset, the eldest of this second generation, was only seventeen when she entered the convent. One day, when she was a mere child, her mother took her to see St. Francis de Sales, who graciously remarked: "Ah, a little sheep! Does she want to be shorn?" The child instantly fell on her knees and presented to the saint her head and her scissors. She was a soul very gentle, extremely timid, a little reserved toward creatures, whom she seemed scarcely to notice, but within full of poetry, full of reverie, which changed after her entrance into religion into recollection and a life wholly contemplative. One day, when Mother de Chantal was playfully questioning the Sisters as to where they would go if they were allowed to make a pilgrimage, one said she would go to Rome, another to Jerusalem, and a third to St. James Compostella; Anne-Marie said: "As for me, the great journey that I would like to take would be to go out of myself in order to go to Jesus Christ." Whilst uttering these words, she was so transported in ecstasy that Mother de Chantal had to have her carried from the room. They foresaw that she would be little capable of founding

or governing convents, but that she would embalm them with the perfume of her interior life. St. Francis, who understood so well the most secret operations of God in souls, ravished at what took place in that of Anne-Marie, reduced to writing all that he remarked in her.

Marie-Denise de Martignat, who most of all resembled Anne-Marie in her gift of prayer, had led in the world a life very different from hers. Beautiful and intelligent, belonging to a distinguished family of Bresse, suitors had crowded around her from early youth. At the age of sixteen she was affianced to a young nobleman who loved her and whom she loved. The day was named for appointing that of the wedding, when a letter from her brother, who was a religious, revealed to her the inestimable value of chastity. Touched by grace, she watered the letter with her tears, gave it to her affianced to read, and for several months applied herself to the difficult task of raising his heart with her own above human affection. As she succeeded but ill, she resolved to break her engagement. On Christmas day she made a vow of chastity, wrote it out, and presented the paper to her affianced when he came to accompany her to church. Tears were his only reply. A whole year passed without their seeing each other. At the end of it, on Christmas day, imagine Mademoiselle de Martignat's surprise and joy, when the young nobleman came to inform her that he, too, was going to consecrate himself to God! She wept with joy, and both went to lay their sacred promise upon an altar of the Holy Rosary, before which they were to have pronounced very different vows. This act they called "*The burial and obsequies of human love.*" A little later the young nobleman joined the Recollets and became a fervent religious. Mademoiselle de Martignat would have been glad to follow his example; but the hour had not yet come. Various circumstances detained her longer in the world. She became maid of honor to the Duchess de Montpensier and afterward to Queen Marie di Médicis, though without yielding to vanity or allowing her fervor to grow cold. She attended the court and won its admiration. But, whilst crowding around her, the young courtiers were on their guard against her. "Beware of falling in love with Made-

moiselle de Martignat," said they laughingly, "for she will make you a Capuchin or a Recollect." The words became a proverb among them. She was in a carriage about thirty steps from that in which Henry IV. was killed, and disgusted with a world in which she had seen the assassination of a king, the tragic end of Marshal d'Ancre and his noble lady, and the fall of so much greatness, she was thinking of quitting all, when a new wave of fortune carried her to the court of Savoy, to be again surrounded by pleasures and favor. She appeared there, as at the French court, always brilliant and always holy, full of wit and full of fervor. Under her silken robes she wore a hair-shirt. She fasted on bread and water two or three days in the week, though in the ball-room she was bright and gay and took her share of its sweets. During the play—for there was every day either a ball, ballet, or play at court—she secretly said her beads, and when finished stealthily made a little sign of the cross on her eyes, forbidding them to see anything. She did all this "without playing the bigot, free from constraint, scrupulosity, or pretence." [1]

She was cheerful, gracious, amiable, and agreeable to every one. The royal princesses sought her company, and the Duchess de Nemours would not be separated from her. It was from the midst of these pleasures, having everything at her command, yet despising everything, that Marie-Denise de Martignat fled to the convent, and took the veil of the spouses of Christ.

There were other vocations more humble, though not less generous. Françoise-Gabrielle Bally had never seen the world. She knew but the bed and the arm-chair of her old paralyzed father. From the age of six to that of eighteen these had bounded her horizon. In the morning she assisted him to rise, seated him in his arm-chair, prepared his meals, and passed the rest of the day working by his side. At night, when his sufferings increased, she encroached upon her own sleep to watch by him and read to him some pious book. Twelve years passed in this heroic exercise of filial duty, and then her father died. She passed from his

[1] *Vies des premières Mères*, vol. ii. p. 167.

death-bed to the cloister, as from one sacrifice to another, or rather from one love to another and greater love. She had been neither disappointed, nor deceived, nor ill-treated. She had loved her father, and she had shut herself up to nurse him; after his death, she shut herself up in the convent, the better to serve God. This was the whole secret of her vocation.

That of Marie Pernet was almost similar. She was a young girl of sixteen who knew nothing of the world except that it was not worth God. When a mere child her innocence had gained for her the appellation of "The Little Angel of Annecy." Her modesty increased with her growth. "She could never be persuaded," says an old biographer, "to go with her neck bare, according to the custom of the time. She invented a kind of kerchief which covered it as closely as the neck of a religious." St. Francis de Sales heard her confession once, and seeing the purity of her virginal heart he exclaimed in admiration: "This little girl is a true child of the Blessed Virgin." At the age of seventeen she received the veil from St. Chantal's hand. During her novitiate she had only one temptation—the thought of her mother! She reproached herself with loving her too much, and of being too happy in her company when she saw her in the parlor.

When we read such facts—and they abound in the early annals of the Visitation—we smile at the thought of what the world thinks of the religious life, of the sombre colors under which it pictures to itself a convent, and of the motives, absurd or ridiculous, which it often attributes to those God calls to the cloister.

It must not be thought, however, that all the religious resembled those we have just been describing. But we question whether there is not something still more touching in the vocation of those whom Almighty God was forced to cast down to the very earth, as He did St. Paul, and whom He tore from the world whilst their heart was still captive to its fascinating joys. Anne-Catherine de Beaumont, who became so great a Foundress and so excellent a Superioress, remained thirty years under its charm. In vain did Monseigneur Camus, Bishop of Belley, when he preached at Cham-

béry, try to teach her the method of mental prayer. She only ridiculed his efforts. In vain did St. Francis de Sales himself, two years later, whilst preaching at the same station, undertake the conquest of this heart seduced by the world. Anne-Catherine made her confession to the saint, wept bitter tears over her faults, and made the firmest resolves; but, after the holy Bishop's departure, again caught up by the whirlwind of pleasure, she ran the giddy round as before, daring neither to marry, for fear of being unfaithful to God, nor to enter the convent, through dread of renouncing the world. It took sickness and the prospect of the grave to open her eyes. After a fifteen years' struggle with God, she entered the convent. From the very first year of novitiate St. Francis de Sales, charmed with her firmness, surnamed her "the Sister of good example." She became one of the greatest among the first Mothers of the Visitation.

Marie-Aimée de Rabutin disputed not less the call of Heaven. Possessing a full share of the wit and vanity hereditary in the illustrious family of the De Rabutins, she dreamed of naught but pleasure and liberty, when she suddenly found herself face to face with death. She entered into herself, but for a time only. With renewed health her taste for pleasure returned. A young nobleman having asked her hand, she gave it to him. But here God was awaiting her. Full of preparations for her marriage, she entered one morning into the church at Cluny, and knelt down before a statue of the Blessed Virgin. At that instant she was seized with extreme disgust for the world and an intense desire to give herself to God. This inspiration might, perhaps, have passed over her soul like many others and as speedily vanished, had not Mother de Chantal just then passed through Burgundy. Mademoiselle de Rabutin confided to her the resolution she had taken. "Make haste, my child," said the saint, "for you know God is an enemy to delay." Some days after she entered the convent at Annecy, and it took all Mother de Chantal's energy to moderate her penance and sacrifices. She aided in the most important foundations, everywhere displaying most charming sweetness.

But of all whom the grace of God snatched from the world in spite of themselves, none so obstinately resisted at

first, or so generously submitted when vanquished, as Marie-Marguerite Michel. She belonged to a wealthy family of Franche-Comté, and, like many other young girls, her danger lay in her beauty. One night it seemed to her in sleep that a child clothed in white approached, and scratched her face, saying: "You will now be much more beautiful in the eyes of your Spouse." Marie-Marguerite awoke screaming and insisting that the skin had been torn from her face. Her mother, finding nothing the matter with her face, treated her as a silly dreamer, and bade her go to sleep again. Two days after, Marguerite was attacked by the small-pox, and her face did, indeed, become disfigured. But she still possessed so many means of pleasing the world, she was still so witty, lively, graceful, so accomplished in every way, that she thought not of abandoning her life of pleasure and dissipation. One day, whilst resting after a grand ball, there suddenly appeared before her the same child that had scratched her face. He seemed irritated. "You are going too far," he said; "I know how to put a stop to the mad extravagance of your youth." And taking hold of her feet, he crushed them so severely that she screamed aloud. Shortly after, she fell and hurt her foot so seriously that, despite all remedies, she was lame for the rest of her life. On the fourth day after this accident, as she was crying and grieving, the child again appeared, but this time radiant with light. Marguerite was frightened and hid her head under the bed-covering. "I told you," said the child, smiling, "that I would succeed in putting a stop to the follies of your youth. Give your heart to God now, since your body is disfigured." Marguerite tried to obey. It was, in fact, upon that bed of pain, where she lay for six weeks, that she learned to pray, and that her soul began to relish heavenly things. Nature, however, was far from being conquered. One day, in the early part of her convalescence, she chanced to see herself in a mirror. Her disfigured face and crippled figure brought tears to her eyes. At the same instant the child again appeared, holding a veil upon which the figure of Jesus dying was depicted. "Ah! what is that?" exclaimed Marguerite. "It is the Lover of your soul," answered the child. "See to what

love has reduced Him." Marguerite's heart was touched by these words, and from that time she loved her deformity and would not exchange it for all the advantages the world could offer. She went to St. Francis de Sales, resolved to become a religious, but a little embarrassed because her family, opposed to her design, would not give her a dowry. "Ah! well," said the saint, "if you have nothing, we want nothing. Offer these two nothings to God, and go tell Mother de Chantal that she may receive you for nothing." The holy Foundress received her with joy, and the saintly Bishop himself deigned to give her the habit. Her novitiate was noted for her sacrifices, and her life for the numerous and admirable foundations she conducted. St. Francis de Sales used to say: "Ah! how well this cripple walks!" "This cripple," indeed, governed the convents of Belley, Dijon, Verceil, and Arone; founded those of Besançon, Dôle, Gray, Salins, and Soleure; arranged the foundations of Fribourg, Plaisance, Milan, and Munich, Bavaria; and if "this cripple" had lived one year longer, she would have carried the Visitation to Canada.

We now turn to another, and a very different character. She belonged neither to the nobility nor to the gentry. She was a simple peasant-girl, a waif picked up through charity, who could neither read nor write, and whose artlessness was so great that the Sisters laughingly named her Sister Simplicienne.

She must have been about nineteen when her old uncle brought her to the convent. The next day St. Chantal met her in the cloister, broom in hand, and asked her why she wished to be a religious. "Because," replied the girl, "my uncle says I am not smart enough to live in the world in the fear of God, as I believe and do all that is told me." The saint pressing her to explain why she acted so simply, she replied: "It is because I do not believe that a Christian would say or do anything bad. The Huguenots are the only ones who say and do bad things. I take care not to believe them. I have never trusted a word they have told me,"—an answer that combined both innocence and prudence.

As she had heard that the religious life was a heavenly

one and that the Sisters at Annecy lived like angels, she took the words literally; and thinking that corporal needs no longer existed in religion, she gave to the poor all her linen and everything else she possessed. Oh, her astonishment when Mother de Chantal asked her where was her little bundle! The question upset all her preconceived ideas.

But still greater was her amazement when she saw the Sisters eating in the refectory and retiring to their cells to sleep. After a long search for the reason of such an infraction of the laws of the angelic life, she at length found it. "Ah!" she said to herself, "these good religious do not eat because they stand in need of food. They are angels, they live but in spirit. But they eat to give you confidence, you poor, miserable creature, who, coming from the world full of imperfections and defects, cannot yet live without eating and drinking. Good God! how great is the charity of these holy nuns!"

All that she saw in the convent drew from her exclamations of admiration. The Sisters' recollection, the silence of the cloisters, the chanting of the Office, the processions to the little oratories, the bows to the Superioress,—all excited joyous surprise. "Oh, how nice all this is! Ah, my God! where was I reared? How unfortunate I have been not to have seen these beautiful things sooner!" When the Sisters conversed about God, she melted into tears. "My good uncle knew many pious things," she used to say; "but he did not know all this." She scarcely dared approach the Sisters. "You are nothing but a country-girl," she would say to herself; "be on your guard as to how you approach these angels." When in the kitchen, she used to kneel down and kiss the vessels of which the Sisters made use. "For," she said, "I am not worthy to touch what serves the spouses of my God."

Simplicity, humility, and innocence were the perfumes exhaled from this soul. With them souls mount to ecstasy. With them souls work miracles. This is what happened, as we shall see. This humble girl, who could neither read nor write, will be the one to announce to St. Francis de Sales the day of his death; and when St. Chantal, sinking under the

weight of affliction, shall stand in need of some one to understand and console her, she will seek none other than Sister Simplicienne.[1]

These are some of the religious who, in the year 1616, or soon after, composed the Visitation Community at Annecy. They were nearly all from Savoy or Burgundy. Those two small provinces, one of which had given St. Francis de Sales, the other St. Chantal, to the Church, seemed now to be striving which should send them the most active and generous co-operators.

Meanwhile the saintly Bishop was daily receiving letters from Moulins, pressing him to found a house of the Visitation in that city. Unable to resist longer on account of the character and high dignity of those that petitioned for the favor, and still less able to send Mother de Chantal, who was in very bad health, he gave the mission to Mother de Bréchard, St. Chantal's first companion. She was a worthy substitute, for Almighty God had bestowed upon her the two qualities most necessary for the success of a foundation, zeal and courage. Sisters Françoise-Gabrielle Bally, Marie-Avoyé Humbert, and Jeanne-Marie de la Croix, all professed members of the Congregation, were appointed to assist her in the undertaking. They left Annecy for Moulins in the early part of August, 1616. This point settled, St. Francis de Sales discharged Mother de Chantal from the care of the novitiate, and confided it to Mother de Châtel. He then zealously resumed the great work of drawing up the Rules of the Institute. For this purpose he held a regular course of conferences with the holy Foundress in the convent parlor, whenever her health allowed her to meet him there. We must now pause to take a glance at the Order of which we are writing. We shall consider its end, its means of action, and its relations with the Orders that preceded or followed it.

Two alternatives presented themselves to the holy Founders. They might create a Rule entirely new, or, in imitation of St. Dominic, take an old Rule and adapt it to their

[1] *Vies des premières Religieuses de la Visitation :* La Sœur Claude de Simplicienne Fardel, vol. ii. p. 1.

end by special Constitutions. Either through humility, or to place their work under the patronage of one of the great lawgivers of the religious life, they chose the latter course, and decided that the Congregation should be erected into an Order under the Rule of St. Augustine. On the one hand, as the holy Bishop of Geneva said, "there is no one more lenient than St. Augustine. His writings are sweetness itself."[1] His Rule is so animated by the spirit of charity as to breathe in everything and everywhere nothing but lenity, mildness, and benignity; and as such it suits persons of every nation and constitution.[2] On the other hand, as has been remarked, this Rule is very general. It comprises only the great counsels, the fundamental duties of the religious life; it indicates no form of government. St. Augustine seems to have wished to trace the vast circumference of a great religious city, rather than a cloister. Within that city and under the protection of those old ramparts, St. Norbert, St. John of Matha, St. Dominic, St. Cajetan, and St. John of God had already built at different epochs the particular edifices of their Institutes. St. Francis de Sales thought that in it he, too, might find a spot for his little beehive.

This first point decided, the Bishop commenced the Constitutions by exposing clearly the end of his Congregation, such as circumstances rather than men had made it; or rather, such as God had made it through the agency of both circumstances and men.

"Many of the devout female sex, secretly drawn by the unction of the Divine Spirit, aspire to a religious life, who, either by the natural infirmities of their constitution, or their being already weakened by age, or not being called to the practice of exterior rigors and austerities, cannot enter into such Religious Orders as oblige to great corporal penances, which we generally observe in the reformed Congregations in these parts. They are thus reduced to remain amidst the ordinary distractions of the world, ever exposed to the occasion of sin, or at least of losing the fervor of devotion, which, undoubtedly, renders them worthy of great compas-

[1] St. Francis de Sales: *Entretien IV., de la Cordialité.*

[2] Rules and Constitutions of the Visitation, *Preface.*

sion. For, pray, who would not pity a generous soul that, ardently wishing to retire from the crowd of this world in order to live wholly to God, cannot do so for want of sufficient strength of body, goodness of constitution, or vigor of youth, so that by the deficiency of health she is prevented or retarded in her desires of acquiring greater sanctity? That, therefore, such souls may be supplied with a safe retreat in these our countries, this Congregation has been formed in such a manner that no great hardship may deter the feeble and infirm from embracing it, there to aim at the perfection of divine love." [1]

We here see the precise end of the Visitation. It is just the opposite of Carmel. There were already cloisters which exhaled the good odor of penance; but they only could enter who were blessed with health and youth. The saintly Bishop of Geneva wished to open retreats for those that had been forgotten; and in imitation of the Saviour, he called the weak, the infirm, to the banquet of the Spouse. Consequently, in the very first lines of his Constitutions, he expressly says: "Widows, equally with single women, may be received into it, provided that, if they have children, they be well and lawfully freed from any charge over them. . . . They, also, may be received who, on account of their age or some corporal infirmity, can have no access to more austere Orders, provided they be of sound mind and well disposed to live in profound humility, obedience, simplicity, meekness, and resignation." But the saint refuses admittance to persons tainted with any contagious disease.

This was an idea bold and touching. St. Francis de Sales was not satisfied with inscribing it at the head of his Rules, but he developed it in his conferences, in his letters, and in his advice both public and private. He energetically maintained it against the criticism of the world, the repugnance of nature, the doubts of human prudence; and he ended by securing its triumph. "What would you have," he replied graciously to some who considered the step too bold, "I am the champion of the weak." [2] And to his daughters who

[1] Constitutions of the Visitation: Of the end for which this Congregation was established.

[2] Process of Canonization; Deposition of Mother de Chaugy.

feared, who could not determine to follow freely and courageously the prescription to receive the sick: "Fear not. If you persevere in charity toward the weak and infirm, God will send you, contrary to human foresight, numbers of fine and agreeable subjects whose charms even the world will acknowledge."[1] These words were fully verified, and they are still wonderfully fulfilled.

As the Visitation was to open its doors to the weak and infirm, great modifications became necessary in monastic customs. Would it be reasonable to retain such practices as rising at night, perpetual abstinence from meat, long fasts, frequent disciplines, sleeping on boards, and chanting the Divine Office? Certainly not. But, on the other side, how suppress these austerities of the cloister without weakening the monastic spirit? Here was the danger, and here, too, were revealed in full brilliancy the wisdom, energy, and prudence of the holy Founders.

Rising at night and sleeping upon boards were the austerities first suppressed. Instead of the plank upon which the daughter of St. Dominic or St. Francis reposes in full dress, they substituted a bed simple and poor, and rising was fixed at five in summer and half-past five in winter. Instead of chanting the Office at midnight, the Sisters of the Visitation were to chant it in the evening at half-past eight, and retire to rest at ten o'clock. Perpetual abstinence from meat, impossible for delicate persons, was also retrenched. Of the long fasts, from September to Easter, customary in the cloister, the fast of Friday, Lent, and some vigils alone was retained. No maceration of the flesh, no corporal mortification, except a few strokes of the discipline on Friday, was admitted. Fearing lest fervor might overstep these limits, St. Francis de Sales expressly forbade Superioresses to allow, either directly or indirectly, any other corporal austerities than those marked in the Rule to creep in, jocosely threatening the Sisters that, if they were unfaithful to this point after his death, he would come back and make such a noise in their dormitories as would make them conscious of having

[1] *Vie de Saint François de Sales*, by Père de la Rivière, p. 329.—Letters of St. Francis de Sales to Mother de Chantal, 1619.

contravened his intentions.[1] As to the Office, he judged proper to prescribe only the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin; and, after long hesitation, Rome consented to this arrangement. He was afraid that the difficulty of studying the Divine Office might intimidate the aged and infirm. Again, he was convinced that being obliged but to the one Office, always the same, they would recite it more devoutly. They would not be forced to give their whole attention to reading and pronouncing well, as they who have daily new Psalms and Lessons to chant are obliged to do; whence it comes, he used to say, that it is painful to hear the silly and ridiculous faults committed by many nuns at almost every word, "for no nation pronounces the Latin so badly as the French." As to the chant, without entirely suppressing it, he reserved it for great feasts only, for Vespers on Sunday, and a few canticles during the week, substituting for it psalmody in straight voice, less fatiguing, and on this account better suited to the plan of the Institute.[2]

From these mitigations of monastic discipline there resulted a mild kind of life, in which there are no more abstinence and fasting than in the ordinary Christian life; in which are required neither early rising nor hard beds nor poor nourishment; and which, by these very mitigations, drew to the religious state many who before would not have dared even to think of it.

But whilst St. Francis de Sales thus relaxed certain chains of the religious life, he tightened others, that nature, spared in the flesh, might be bruised and broken in the spirit and the will.

The first bond that he tightened was that of poverty. It is, perhaps, more formidable in some Orders, but nowhere is it stricter than in the Visitation. There everything is in common. There no Sister can own anything whatever, "though ever so little, under any pretext that can be alleged." There not only the cells and beds, but even the medals, crosses, beads, and pictures are changed every year,

[1] *Réponses de la Mère de Chantal*, p. 106.

[2] See the Constitutions of the Visitation and Letters of St. Francis de Sales to Cardinal Bellarmine.

that the Sisters may live "in a perfect abnegation of the things they use, and not become attached to them."[1]

St. Francis acted in the same manner with regard to the vow of obedience. It is easy enough to do nothing without permission, general or particular, as is practised in other Orders; it is easy enough to obey the Superioress "carefully, faithfully, promptly, simply, candidly, and cordially;" but the holy Bishop required more. He ordained that all the Sisters should present themselves after the noon recreation to the Superioress for directions as to what they should do until evening; and that, in the evening, they should go again, like children, and inquire what they were to do until the next day. This is a practice of humility and obedience which deprives the Visitation nun of the free disposal of one moment of her time.[2]

To perfect the destruction of nature, St. Francis de Sales endeavored to render the mortifications of community life more painful. Worldlings, free from rule or fixed duties, little suspect these mortifications; but they may trust St. Bernard's words: "My greatest penance," said that great saint, worn out with watches and macerations, "is community life." The Bishop of Geneva knew this well. Obliged to renounce corporal mortifications, he laid hold of the community life as of a discipline, unbloody, it is true, but very painful, and he studied to surround it with thorns it had never before known. The legislators of the monastic life up to this period had, indeed, imposed upon religious the obligation of performing in common a certain number of exercises during the course of the day; but these ordinary exercises were few in number and far between. Long hours of free time were left to the religious, who employed them in praying, meditating, writing, and working in their cell. They passed thus from the common to the solitary life by a succession that rendered both the one and the other more delightful. But St. Francis de Sales suppressed all this free time so sweet in the religious life. He divided the day, from five in the morning till ten at night, into a number of

[1] Constitution V., Of Poverty.

[2] Constitution III., Of Obedience; and Constitution IX., Of the Two Daily Obediences.

very short exercises which, incessantly succeeding one another, linking them together as it were, leave the Sister of the Visitation not a moment's leisure, constantly break her own will, and impose new sacrifices upon her at every half hour.

At the same time that he crucified the soul by these successive acts of self-denial, he multiplied the means of uniting it intimately with God: prayer, holy Mass, the Office, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, succeed one another, forming a chain that keeps the religious in perpetual contemplation. Out of the choir, silence, recollection, custody of the eyes, rare visits at the parlor, the veil lowered before strangers, the absence of frivolous games and profane reading, prepare for prayer and render it easy. Two recreations of one hour each relieve the mind without dissipating it; for, during these recreations, at which all assemble, they are to converse only upon subjects agreeable and holily joyous, with peace, mildness, cordiality, and holy simplicity. They receive the Holy Eucharist on Sundays, Thursdays, and on certain feasts during the week. Besides this, three Sisters communicate every day in the name of all the others, as also to respond to the wish of the Church, that there should be some communicants at every Mass.

All wear black habits, made like sacks, moderately wide, and with sleeves long enough to reach the ends of the fingers, and wide enough to cover the hands and allow the arms to be folded in them. Each Sister wears a silver cross, filled with relics, hanging from her neck and resting on her breast, in remembrance of Our Lord's dolorous Passion, and as a sign that she ought to crucify her natural inclinations.[1]

In the Constitution relating to the government of the Order, the same spirit of meekness, moderation, and wisdom is displayed.

The Sisters are divided into three ranks: first, *Choir Sisters*, or those who sing the Office; secondly, *Associated Sisters*, or those who on account of weak health are dispensed from choir duty, but who are in every other respect on an

[1] Constitutions of the Visitation.—*Vie de Saint François de Sales*, by Père de la Rivière, p. 333.

equality with the Choir Sisters; and thirdly, the *Lay*, or *Domestic Sisters*, who wear a white veil, have no vote in the Chapter, and are employed in the heavy labor of the house, but who make the three vows and are as essentially religious as those of the first and second ranks. Inclosure is strict, as prescribed by the Council of Trent. Out-Sisters, who make in public only the vow of obedience, are charged with the exterior service of the house.

Each convent is governed by a Superioress, elected by all the Sisters of the first and second ranks in secret ballot, and by an absolute majority. To secure freedom of suffrage, the Sisters are expressly forbidden to show their tickets to one another, to express their approval or disapproval of the candidates, or to say a single word relating to the election. Prayer, Communion, and the invocation of the Holy Ghost are the only means employed to know the will of God.

The Superioress is elected for three years, at the end of which she may be re-elected; but after that time, all reasons to the contrary notwithstanding, she is to be deposed. She who has commanded others must again learn to obey, and for this purpose the last place in the Community is assigned her by the Rule.

During the time of her Superiority, the Sisters are bound to treat her with profound respect, to obey her in everything not contrary to the law of God and the Rule. The Superioress, on her side, is required to command "with a grave, but mild, speech and countenance, with a firm, but meek and humble, look and demeanor, and with a heart full of love." "She shall with maternal affection open a free and amiable access to all the Sisters alike, aiming at being much more loved than feared." [1]

A Council of four Sisters, elected by the Chapter, is given her to assist in the government of the house. An Assistant takes her place when she is absent. Moreover, immediately after her election, "the Superioress shall choose, according to her liking, one of the Sisters, whose charge it shall be to admonish her of the faults she may commit, and through whom the other Sisters may correct her; so that she who is

[1] Constitutions XXIX. and XXX.

to assist and correct all the others may not be the only one deprived of the benefit of a like correction." This Sister is to fulfil her duty freely and sincerely, without, however, derogating in any manner from the honor, respect, and obedience due to the Superioress.[1]

The houses of the Order are independent, the only bond of union being that of charity and prayer. Circulars, sent out from time to time, keep the whole Order acquainted with what is passing in each convent. There is no Superior-General, no General Chapters to assemble the Superioresses of the Order. Each convent is placed under the direct and immediate supervision of the Bishop of the diocese. This important rule, so frequently discussed in the lifetime of the Founder, called in question again after his death, energetically maintained by St. Chantal, though disputed anew after her death, finally prevailed, and so far the Order has had no reason to regret it.

Two priests are appointed by the Bishop to guard the convent; one, with the title of Superior, or Spiritual Father, the other is the Confessor. The former is especially charged with the temporal interests; the latter cares for the conscience of the Sisters. The one watches over the observance of the Rule; the other breathes into them the spirit. The Confessor corrects the abuses, which the Spiritual Father tries to prevent. This Superior is commonly the Vicar-General of the diocese, and he is consulted only in "matters of great importance." The Confessor, more closely connected with the Community, is the ordinary director and adviser of the convent. Both ought to be "men of learning, prudence, and irreproachable life, discreet, civil, steady, and pious." The Rule requires the Confessor to "treat the Sisters with respect, looking upon them as the consecrated spouses of the Son of God;" and the Sisters are enjoined to honor him "as the visible angel deputed to guard the souls in the convent."[2]

Such are the principal Rules of the Order of the Visitation. Mildness predominates in them; moderation and good practical sense distinguish them. Made for persons of

[1] Constitution XXXV. [2] Constitutions XIX. and XXVIII.

delicate health and generous souls, they present nothing that can weaken the body, they omit nothing that can crucify the soul. Without fasts, watchings, or corporal macerations, they subdue nature as thoroughly as the most austere Rules, and by maintaining in the soul recollection, modesty, and silence, by constantly enkindling the fire of holy love, they elevate it to the highest degrees of union with God.

There is, however, something still more admirable than these Rules, so wise, so moderate—namely, the spirit that animates them. Every Order has its spirit; otherwise, however beautiful its laws, it could not live,—it would be but a statue or a corpse. The spirit vivifies the law, sustains customs, and produces fertile works and immortal institutions. In Religious Orders this spirit is so powerful that it renders them, in a manner, indestructible. Century after century, those apparently frail societies, with no material power to defend them, resist alike the shock of revolutions from within and the attacks of enemies from without. It even penetrates so deeply the heart of the religious as to imprint, so to say, its characteristics upon their countenance.

This spirit is not the same in all Orders; for although all Orders tend to the same end, namely, the perfection of the soul in God, all do not arrive thereto by the same way. In some it is by prayer, in others by zeal; in others, again, it is by penance or by love for the poor. Now, as the Order of the Visitation was established for the weak and infirm, by what spirit could it be animated if not by that of sweetness, mutual support, and holy cordiality? St. Francis de Sales reverts to this incessantly. He wishes his daughters to be always affable and gracious, to have honey upon their lips and charity in their heart, to know how to love and bear with one another, to help one another, to abound and superabound in meekness. He has so insisted on this point, that he made it penetrate, so to say, into the very heart of the Order, of which it forms to-day, after a lapse of over two hundred and fifty years, one of the most characteristic and most pleasing features. That this spirit might exist in full beauty, he wished the Sisters to add to it humility and simplicity: humility, without which there is no meekness;

simplicity, without which there is no cordiality: humility and simplicity in thought, intention, word, and action—the humility and simplicity of children, he said, who have but one heart, but one soul, but one life, but one hope in time and in eternity.[1]

From this triple spirit of simplicity, meekness, and humility, there results a perfect and charming manner of acting, by which, without great apparent effort and even with seeming unconcern, the religious reaches the highest point of perfection. Let us listen to St. Francis de Sales himself explaining and describing it in a charming page, which St. Chantal calls "the abridgment of the whole perfection of the Order."

The good Lay-Sister whose simplicity had gained for her the name of Sister Simplicienne, and who was, also, distinguished for the highest virtue, and even for the gift of miracles, said to the Bishop one day when he was presiding over one of their recreations: "My Lord, I should like to hold your place in the convent, and perform all my actions as you would do them if you were here." These ingenuous words made the saint smile, and gave him a text. "What say you, my dear daughter Simplicienne? You would like to hold my place here, and do what I should do were I here? And how should I do, my daughter? Certainly not so well as you, for I am good for nothing; but it seems to me that, with God's grace, I should be so attentive to the practice of all the petty little observances prescribed for this house, that by this means I should try to gain the heart of God. I should keep silence so well, and I should also speak sometimes, even in time of silence; I mean when charity called for it, but never otherwise. I should speak in a very low tone, and I should pay particular attention to this point, because the Constitution orders it. I should open and close the doors very gently, because our Mother wishes it, and we certainly want to do all that she desires. I should always keep my eyes cast down and walk very modestly; for, my dear child, God and His angels are always looking at us, and they love with particular affection those who act well. If

[1] *Entretien* XII., *De la Simplicité.*

they employed me in anything or gave me some charge, I should love it well, and try to perform it well. If they employed me in nothing, and left me to do nothing, I should not meddle with anything, but be very obedient and love Our Lord well. Oh, it seems to me that I should, indeed, love this good God with all my heart, and to that I should apply my whole mind, and to the exact observance of the Rules and Constitutions! Ah! my dear daughter Simplicienne, we must do this as well as we possibly can. Is it not true that we both became religious for that? I am certainly delighted that there is a Sister here who wishes to hold my place and be a religious for me; but I am especially pleased that it is Sister Claude-Simplicienne, for I love her well, this Sister Simplicienne. . . . Shall I tell you still more, my dearest daughter? It seems to me that I should be very joyous, and that I should never be in a hurry. This, thank God, I do already, for I am never eager; but I should then practise it still better. I should keep myself little and low. I should humble myself and make acts of humility whenever I had a chance; and, if I had not humbled myself, I should, at least, humble myself for not having humbled myself. I should try, as far as I could, to be mindful of God's presence and to do all my actions for His love. And know you, my dear daughter Simplicienne, I hope that I should let them do with me whatever they wished, and I should often read the chapters of our Constitutions on Humility and Modesty. O my dear daughter, they ought to be read often and practised faithfully."[1]

How many points are here contained! That exact silence which charity alone may break, the low tone in speaking, the gentle closing of doors and windows, the modest walk, the downcast eyes, the calm indifference to employments, the care to avoid eagerness, the effort to be always cheerful and gracious, and the attention to keep one's self little and low—all portray the true spirit of the Visitation, its distinctive and original character.

They who know the saintly Bishop of Geneva are not

[1] *Petite Coutume du Monastère de la Visitation d'Annecy*, p. 21. New edition. Annecy, 1849.

surprised at his having established a manner of living so holy, so pleasing. It was his own. But it is not so easy to understand at first sight how St. Chantal could have been chosen by Almighty God to lead this life, and to train so many others to it. There was nothing either in her character or her disposition to dispose her to it; on the contrary, she was very ardent, she was naturally eager. Her grand, strong nature had need of action; her robust health, her warm and sanguine temperament, called for penance. She seemed made for the austerities of Carmel, which, in fact, had long been her attraction.

But God is wonderful in His ways. It was precisely on account of her rare energy that Mother de Chantal was placed at the head of the Visitation. The strongest woman was to found the mildest Institute, in order to show the world, scandalized without reason, that this mildness was only apparent, that there were thorns beneath those flowers, and that these Rules so moderate were also crucifying. How can this be doubted when we see this grand soul, though sighing, as she did, for austerities, contenting herself for the space of thirty years with the mortifications offered her by this Rule, and rising by those little practices to so marvellous a degree of sanctity?

Besides, scarcely had Madame de Chantal entered into this cloister, built for the infirm, than, as we have said, her vigorous health disappeared. Strange maladies, one after another, attacked and wasted her strong constitution. She who was to govern the infirm became infirm herself, that she might learn to compassionate their weakness. This is what God gave her to understand; and in the midst of the most violent pain she was heard to exclaim: "Yes, my God, let this too ardent nature suffer. Let it suffer, and learn whether it is well to be too eager for exterior mortification, either for itself or for others." [1]

It is a remarkable fact that St. Chantal had never been weaker, longer and more seriously ill, than during the two years, 1616 and 1617, employed by St. Francis de Sales and herself in the definitive arrangement of the Rules of the

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 150.

Order. She passed those two entire years on her bed in a state of languor, as if God feared that, if left in vigorous health, she would have lent too willing an ear to the inspirations of her zeal, would not have sufficiently condescended to the needs of her daughters, and, unconsciously ruled by her ardor for penance, would have established a second Carmel instead of creating a Visitation.

Whilst thus weakening by sickness her exuberant corporal strength, God checked, though in a different manner, her too great mental activity. After seven or eight years passed in the elementary exercises of prayer, St. Chantal felt herself, in 1609, suddenly drawn to a kind of passive prayer, of which we shall here say but a word, reserving a closer study of its wonderful ways for the following chapter. As soon as she commenced to pray, she felt herself under the influence of a very close union with God, which left neither mind nor will at liberty for any act excepting that of total self-abandonment to the Divine Will. What she at first felt only in meditation she soon after experienced at holy Mass, holy Communion, thanksgiving, and during the Holy Office,—everywhere the same desire to rest in that most simple union with God without the possibility of making other acts. The saint, at first, felt the greatest difficulty in entering this way. Her active mind, her prompt and ardent will, led ever to action, and when she remained thus passive and united, above all in time of spiritual dryness, it seemed to her that she was doing nothing. Fearing to lose time, she most strenuously endeavored to escape from that state. Fortunately, St. Francis de Sales would never yield consent to her acting in this manner. Besides the obedience that such attractions claim, this great director soon understood the end God had in view in sending them to Mother de Chantal. "Your prayer is good," he incessantly repeated to her. "It is God who wills you to follow this method." And he added these words so full of life: "Why take the part of Martha in prayer, since God wishes you to practise that of Mary? I command you, then, to continue simply the prayer that God gives you."[1] Thus, according to St. Francis de Sales,

[1] De Maupas: *La Vie de la Mère Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot*, part ii. chap. vii.

God had sent Mother de Chantal this kind of prayer to modify and transform her spiritually. Of a Martha He wished to make a Mary. Thither tended those admirable operations of divine grace that we have already seen, and that we shall again witness.

To this grand work of the providential preparation of St. Chantal, nothing now remained but to perfect her exterior activity. If God had deprived her of health during the years employed in the compilation of the Rules of the Visitation, He was ready to restore it as soon as the time for extending the Order arrived; and the passive way into which He had led her was not to prevent her from traversing France to found convents, to multiply good works, and to give to the Church the spectacle of the most active and fruitful zeal. It was in Burgundy, during her visit thither after her father's death, that occurred the wonderful event by which God willed to prepare His servant for her future labors. She went one morning into a little village chapel to hear Mass. She had scarcely knelt down when she fell into a rapture, which so deprived her of the use of her senses that she neither perceived the priest at the altar nor the Mass that was going on. Long after it was over she still knelt in the same position. Her son-in-law, the young Baron de Thorens, seeing her still in prayer, went to order dinner. On returning, he asked Sister Favre, who accompanied her, how much longer Mother de Chantal would be at her prayers. Sister Favre answered that the saint had not moved, and that she had not dared to speak to her. The young Baron, less timid, approached and touched the saint on her shoulder. She started in surprise, as if from sleep, and it was some time before she regained perfect consciousness. Then she asked to be allowed to hear holy Mass. When they told her that it was over, she rose without a word and left the chapel; but she was so absorbed as to be unable to dine.

It was in this ecstasy that Almighty God showed Mother de Chantal the pleasure He takes in pure souls, and that He inspired her with the desire of making the vow to do always what would appear to her most perfect. But with her usual prudence, she waited for her director's permission. On her

return to Annecy she really made that formidable vow. Her life from this period underwent a change. For at least five years, from 1612 to 1617, every time she knelt at the Holy Table she felt around her heart so great an interior heat that she could scarcely bear it. "At such moments," she said, "I was thinking of my vow always to do what I knew to be most perfect. It seemed to me that at every Communion this fire burned and consumed my interior imperfections." [1]

Some years before, a nun belonging to a Spanish cloister had received from God a similar favor. She was praying one day, when suddenly there appeared before her an angel in human form holding in his hand a golden arrow, the point of which he was sharpening. Whilst gazing upon him in wonder, she felt an acute pain in her heart, as if it had been pierced by a dart, and, a little after, more and more consumed with divine love, she promised God to do always what would appear to her most perfect. This religious our readers will easily recognize as St. Teresa.

But in St. Teresa the vivacity of her imagination thwarted her courage, and her directors were obliged to dispense her from a vow whose difficult observance embarrassed her mind, though without daunting her generosity.[2] St. Chantal, not less ardent, but very practical, made this vow thirty years before her death, and kept it without need of dispensation until her last breath.

Both women were admirable. The first soared like the eagle above the clouds, and gazed upon the Sun of Justice. In her sublime contemplations she appeared endowed with the eye and heart of a seraph. The second, with the wings of a dove, taking, it would seem, a lower flight, yet mounted as high, since, in the opinion of St. Francis de Sales and St. Vincent de Paul, no one ever attained more eminent perfection.

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 469.—*Procès de Canonization:* Mother Favre de Charmette's Deposition, vol. i. p. 145.

[2] Bollandists. *Acta Sanctorum*, October 15.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MOTHER DE CHANTAL'S PRAYER.—ST. FRANCIS DE SALES COMPOSES FOR HER AND HER DAUGHTERS THE TREATISE ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

1617.

We must pause a moment to consider more closely Mother de Chantal's manner of prayer. Our readers have already learned something of it in the course of this work. They have seen the saint mounting, one by one, the elementary degrees of prayer, and they will remember with what humility on her part and with what prudence on the part of her great director. We shall now see her ascending to degrees more sublime, always filled with the same humility, assisted by the same wisdom, until at last she attained that prayer of quiet which was the prayer of her entire religious life. They who are little familiar with this subject may, without difficulty, skip this chapter and proceed to the second volume, in which they will find the continuation of the facts of St. Chantal's history. We beg the others to lend us their attention, for we are about to touch upon the most delicate operations of grace, upon relations the most secret, the most sacred, between the Creator and the creature. But we shall have a good guide. Bossuet himself will lead the way, and with the light of his genius and good sense dissipate the obscurity and smooth away the difficulty which, notwithstanding their precision, might be found in the words of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal.[1]

[1] In his beautiful book on the "*États d'Oraison*," Bossuet has especially treated of the prayer of St. Chantal. His reason for doing so was, of course, different from ours. He had controversy in view; but, although this is far from being our end, we find in his work a clue and much valuable information.

Let us first hearken to Mother de Chantal. She herself describes the kind of prayer to which she began to feel attracted in 1609, to the perfection of which she attained, so to say, from 1615 to 1617. It is to St. Francis de Sales that she writes. The letter we are about to quote, and which must be carefully read, is one of the five or six precious epistles that escaped the fire to which her humility had condemned them.

"I have many things to tell you, my unique Father, but I know not where they are, so overwhelmed and distracted is my poor mind with a thousand worries. I no longer feel that abandonment and sweet confidence (which I used to have in prayer), nor can I make any acts of those virtues, although it seems to me they are more solid and firm than ever. In its superior part, my soul is in a state of very simple union. It does not bring about this union itself; for when, on certain occasions, it wishes to make acts of union, it feels a difficulty in doing so. It clearly sees that it cannot unite itself, but can only remain united. It has no inclination to change this state for any other. It neither thinks nor acts, if I except the consciousness of desire, formed almost imperceptibly that God may do with it and with all creatures, in all things, whatever He shall please. It would wish to do nothing but this for the morning exercise, at holy Mass, in preparation for holy Communion, and in thanksgiving for all benefits; in a word, for everything. It wishes only to remain in this most simple unity of mind with God, without looking elsewhere, and whilst in this state to say sometimes vocally an *Our Father* for the whole world, for individuals, and for itself, without, however, diverting its attention or thinking for whom or for what it prays. Frequently, according to occasions, necessity, or inclination, which last comes without being sought, my soul flows into this union. With regard to this manner of prayer, I believe indeed that it suffices for everything; nevertheless, my unique Father, I am very often assailed by fears on this head, and I force myself (which I find very difficult) to make acts of union, adoration, the exercise of the morning, of Mass, and of thanksgiving. If I do wrong in this, please to tell me. Tell me, also, whether this simple union suffices,

whether it will satisfy God for all the acts I have just mentioned, which are of obligation for us; nay, even, if it will suffice during spiritual aridity when the soul has no perception or consciousness of such union, except in its very highest point. I do not ask you for a long answer on the subject. In a dozen words you can tell me all that, repeating my question, if you choose, and assuring me that this simple union will suffice for everything; then I shall, with God's help, be faithful to make no more acts." [1]

We here see clearly the kind of prayer practised by Mother de Chantal. The soul, recalling the presence of God, is suddenly seized and carried away out of itself by the thought of that Infinite Majesty, and there remains captive, bound, and, as it were, riveted. In this state the soul is so closely united with God that it has no distinct consciousness of its own operations. It forgets itself, rejects every kind of discourse and reasoning, of which it has no need, and feels all its powers concentrated in one simple view, but so profound, so *uniting*, that it seems at times about to lose itself in God. It remains in this state for entire hours without words, without thoughts, almost without feeling, scarcely knowing where it is, conscious only that all is well with it, and understanding from its unalterable peace that God is penetrating its whole being. At other times it produces those acts of faith, adoration, union, and thanksgiving, usually made in prayer; though, at the moment, it neither can nor wishes to make them. They fatigue it; and, if it forces itself to make them, they trouble it. All is simplified in it, all is concentrated in this single glance, in this union so profound and so simple, that it is, as it were, abyssed in God. This is called the prayer of simple contemplation, of recollection in God, of repose, of quiet,—for all these terms mark different shades of the same state. The more general title for it, however, is *passive prayer*, because it is characterized by a kind of suspension of the powers of the soul, a moral impossibility to make other acts than that simple regard of which we have spoken.

Let us pause here, with Bossuet, at this term *passive*

[1] Letters of St. Chantal. The first to St. Francis de Sales.

prayer, to conjure men of the world who venture to peruse this chapter not to treat it as visions and dreams. Do they doubt that God, who is wonderful in all His works, and particularly so in His saints, has especial means, unknown to the world, to communicate Himself to His friends, to keep them under His hand, and make them feel His sweet sovereignty? Let them fear, then, lest their rash judgment incur the just reproach made by the apostle St. Jude to them who blasphemed what they knew not. "To keep them in respect for the ways of God, I will tell them," continues Bossuet, "that this passive prayer of Mother de Chantal was examined not only by the greatest spiritual director of the age, St. Francis de Sales, a Bishop of so high authority, on account of his learning and sanctity, but also by the most enlightened of his contemporaries. It was for this reason that the holy Bishop, speaking to St. Chantal, said: 'Your prayer of simple remission in God is extremely good and salutary. It has been so well examined that you must have no doubts about it. All think that Our Lord wishes you to follow this kind of prayer.'"[1]

In order to have a full idea of St. Chantal's method of prayer, we shall add to the letter just quoted a still more important document, which, entering into details, casts greater light upon the wonderful ways of God.

Scarcely did Mother de Chantal begin to be elevated to this kind of prayer, before she experienced repugnance, on account of her ardent nature, and difficulty, on account of the novelty of the attraction. It was for her a question, a problem, a subject of anxiety. Like a traveller on a strange road, she feared at each step to go astray. A thousand questions thus troubling her soul, she resolved to put them in writing and present them to her director with the earnest petition that he would examine and explain them. St. Francis de Sales returned them with his answers on the margin. We give below this valuable manuscript precisely as it was found among St. Chantal's papers. Let us weigh both the questions and the answers. St. Francis de Sales

[1] *États d'Oraison*, book viii. chap. xvii.

and St. Chantal, despite their difference of style, possess the gift of precision and clearness.[1]

IN THE NAME OF JESUS AND MARY.

Questions presented to our blessed Father by his dear daughter.

THE DAUGHTER.

"First, you ought to ask your dear master whether he wishes you to renew to him every year by way of reconfirmation your vows, your act of general abandonment and remission of yourself into the hands of God. Let him specify particularly in what point he judges this abandonment to be the most necessary for you, so that it may be perfect and without exception, and that you may be able to say with truth: *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.* Then, in order that you may attain this state, ask your master not to spare you and not to allow you to make any reservation, little or great. Ask him, also, to tell you the exercises and daily practices requisite for this, that your abandonment may be truly and really perfect."

OUR BLESSED FATHER'S ANSWER.

"I answer, in the name of Our Lord and of Our Lady, that it will be good, my dearest daughter, to renew and reanimate, every year, the perfect abandonment of yourself into the hands of God. For this end I shall not spare you. You will retrench all superfluous words relating to the love, however legitimate, of creatures, particularly of your relatives, family, country, and, above all, of your Father, as well as can be done; nay, I even require you not to dwell long in thought on any of these things, excepting when duty or business calls for it, in order to practise perfectly these words: *Audi, filia, et vide, et inclina aurem tuam; et obliviscere populum tuum, et*

[1] These questions and answers are given in De Maupas' *Vie de la Vénérable Mère J. F. Frémyot*, part ii. chap. vii., but arranged according to the too general custom of his period. We give the authentic text from a manuscript, a copy of which we owe to the friendly courtesy of the Rev. P. Dom Pitra.

domum patris tui (Ps. xliv. 11). Yes, my child, attend, lend thine ear, forget thy people and thy father's house. Before dinner, and supper, and at night before going to bed, examine whether, with regard to the actions of the time just passed, you can sincerely say: *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.*"

THE DAUGHTER.

"Ought not the soul, after it has thus surrendered itself into Our Lord's hands, lose sight, as far as possible, of everything else by the continual remembrance of God, and rely upon Him alone with sincere and full confidence?"

OUR BLESSED FATHER.

"Yes, you ought, for God's sake, to forget whatever is foreign to God, and rest in peace under His divine guidance."

THE DAUGHTER.

"Ought not the soul, especially in prayer, try to check all kinds of discourse, reasoning, argument, curiosity, and the like; and instead of considering what it has done, what it will do, or what it has to do, look at God alone and thus simplify the workings of the mind, and drive from it every thought of self? Should it not make this same exercise out of the time of prayer, as well as during it, remaining in this simple view of God and of its own nothingness, entirely abandoned to His holy will, under the effects of which it should remain happy and contented, without attempting to make acts either of the understanding or of the will? I say, even in the practice of virtue and in the commission of faults and imperfections, it should continue faithful to this exercise, it seems to me; for Our Lord infuses into the soul the necessary sentiments, and there perfectly enlightens it in everything; and this enlightenment is a thousand times better than any derived from reasoning or efforts of the imagination.

"You ask me: 'Why, then, do you not keep to this exercise?'

"O God! that is my misfortune, and it happens in spite

of myself. Experience has taught me that it is very injurious; but I am not mistress of my mind, which, without my leave, wishes to see and direct everything. For this reason, I again ask, my very dear master, the assistance of holy obedience, to check this miserable rambler, for it is my opinion that it will fear a positive command."

OUR BLESSED FATHER.

"Since Our Lord has long been attracting you to this kind of prayer, having allowed you to taste the very desirable fruit produced by it, and since, also, you know the disadvantages of the contrary method, remain firm, and as gently as you can lead back your mind to that unity and simplicity of thought and abandonment in God. Since for that you wish to employ obedience, I should say to you: My dear mind, since God has given you to understand that He wishes you to act the part of Mary, why would you exercise that of Martha? I command you, then, simply to remain either in God or near God, without trying to do anything and without asking Him any questions whatever, except when He shall inspire you to do so."

Could language be clearer than this or distinguish better the delicate operations of grace?

First, the passive character of this prayer is distinctly marked. It is God who calls to it. The soul does not intrude itself into it. Nature, far from being able to conduct to it, does not even wish to remain in it. An extraordinary operation of grace is necessary to bind the powers of the soul, and constrain them to rest in this holy repose. Sometimes, even, when the mind is very active and the will very ardent, there is need, as we have just seen, to call in the assistance of obedience and positive command.

Remark the difference between this state and that which is called ecstasy or rapture. In ecstasy, the suspension of the soul is absolute; in the prayer of quiet it is only moral. In ecstasy, the soul loses all liberty, all freedom of mind and will. It cannot even tell whether it is *in the body or out of*

the body[1] that it is rapt in God. In the prayer of quiet, on the contrary, the soul preserves its full liberty of action, though, in the excellent state in which it is, there is no need of using that liberty. Its sole occupation is silence, mute admiration, sweet repose in possession. It no longer questions like St. Peter; it sleeps, like St. John, on the Heart of its Beloved. Happy slumber, by which it testifies greater love for Our Lord, and in which it receives more favors than in meditation the most sublime or in acts the most heroic!

This was what St. Francis de Sales tried to make Mother de Chantal understand. She feared losing her time in this holy repose. "Fear not," the saintly Bishop constantly repeated to her, "you are like the dear St. John. Whilst others by divers considerations and pious meditations are partaking of many viands at Our Saviour's table, you by this amorous sleep are resting on His sacred bosom. This slumbering of your soul in the arms of the Saviour," he added, "comprises, in a most excellent manner, everything that you go about seeking, here and there, to gratify your taste."

St. Francis de Sales put the finishing stroke to his explanation of this difficult point, and flooded it with light by the beautiful comparison of the statue, so celebrated among spiritual writers.

"If a statue, placed in a niche in the middle of a room, had the power of speech and were asked: 'Why are you there?' it would answer: 'Because my master, the sculptor, placed me here.'—'Why do you not move?'—'Because he wishes me to remain stationary. It is not for myself that I am here; it is to serve and obey my master's will.'—'But you do not see him.'—'No; but he sees me and takes pleasure in my being where he placed me.'—'But would you not like to have the power of moving, that you might approach nearer to him?'—'Not unless he should command me to do so.'—'Do you, then, desire nothing?'—'No; because I am where my master placed me.'"

This is the summit of perfection. The soul cannot ascend higher. Self has disappeared; the human will is annihilated,

[1] II. Cor. xii. 2.

or rather, is identified with that of God. Wherever it looks, it sees nothing but its Beloved. Everything else is nothing in its eyes; and in its Beloved it sees neither His wisdom, nor His power, nor His happiness—it sees but His will. Heaven, earth, life, death, consolation, aridity, desolation, ecstasy, repose, action,—all are alike to it, all good, provided the Master wills it. If in this state of sweet repose a distinct thought could arise in the mind, it would be: *Fiat voluntas tua*—O Father, O Master, O Friend, O Spouse, Thy holy will now and forever!

Such was Mother de Chantal's state. Mother de Chaugy, also, speaking of the saint's prayer, said: "No better expression presents itself to my pen, in order to give a true idea of her attraction and her interior life, than to say that it was an uninterrupted *fiat voluntas*." [1] And St. Francis de Sales wrote to the saint: "Remember what I have so often told you and what I have put in *Theotime*, which was written for you and such as you: YOU ARE THE WISE STATUE. The Master has placed you in the niche; leave it only when He Himself takes you out of it." [2]

It would, however, be an error to believe that, in this passive state, the soul never makes acts without forcing itself and opposing the divine action. "In this passive state," says Mother de Chaugy, "St. Chantal did not fail to act at certain times when God withdrew His operation or when He inspired her to do so. But these acts were always short, humble, and loving." [3] Let us here remark, with Bossuet, the two circumstances that restored to our saint her liberty of action. "The one, when God withdrew His operation, that is, the extraordinary operation which chained her powers and held her a happy captive under an omnipotent Hand; the other, when God Himself incited her to act by those sweet invitations, by that facility and inclination which He knows so well how to impart to the heart when it pleases Him." [4]

When Mother Favre asked St. Chantal whether she made acts in prayer, she answered: "Yes, my child, *when God*

[1] *Mémoires*, part iii. chap. xxiv.
[2] *Idem*, p. 446.
[3] *Mémoires*, part iii. chap. xxiv.
[4] *États d'Oraison*, book viii. chap. xxx.

wishes it, and when He testifies it to me by the impulse of His grace, I sometimes make interior acts, or pronounce some words with my lips, particularly to reject temptations. God does not permit me to be so rash as to presume that I never stand in need of making any act, and I think they who affirm that they never make any do not mean what they say. I even think that our Sister Anne-Marie Rosset makes them without knowing it; at least, I require her to make some exterior acts."[1]

Thus did this saint, prudent and sensible, who never went to extremes, treat those that imagined themselves always in the passive state. As for herself, not only during her whole life, but still more particularly in her prayer, she mingled repose and action according to the need she felt for it.

But in this point more than in any other she was careful to do nothing more *than God willed and inspired her to do.* She was entirely submissive and obedient to Him, whether He invited her to act or abandoned her to herself by withdrawing His operation. She passed from one state to the other, active or passive, as God willed, causing remarkable vicissitude in the life of this great saint. "It tended," says Bossuet, "to make her pliant under God's hand, led her to accommodate herself to the state in which He placed her, and produced those virtues, that admirable submission and resignation, which appeared in her life."[2]

This extraordinary state, which the saint experienced at first only during meditation, soon became familiar to her at holy Mass, Communion, the Office, and often even during the whole day. Sometimes it was but a gleam of light, during which she would remain silent, her eyes closed, united to God by a simple glance. At other times this state was prolonged for entire hours, though without interfering with her liberty of mind or action. Her countenance became inflamed, and revealed, in spite of herself, to what a height her holy soul was elevated.

From this epoch Mother de Chantal's historians note a remarkable advancement, a second step, as it were, in perfection. The first was in 1606. It was the result of pru-

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, part iii. chap. xxv.

[2] *États d'Oraison,* book viii. chap. xxx.

dent and skilful direction. The second was accomplished between the years 1612 and 1615. After one or two years of passive prayer, we find in Mother de Chantal lights she never before had, sublime thoughts about God, herself, and creatures, an increase of zeal, abandonment to the divine will, contempt for earthly things, and an inexpressible thirst for humiliation, which astonished every one. But let us again allow her to speak, and, in the remainder of the questions addressed by her to her holy director, we shall see her beautiful soul opening before our admiring eyes and revealing the treasures of faith, humility, and detachment, which holy contemplation was constantly depositing in its secret recesses.

THE DAUGHTER.

"I ask, my dearest Father, whether the soul, having thus surrendered itself to the Divine Majesty, ought not to rest calmly in its God, leaving to Him the care of all that concerns it, interiorly and exteriorly, and trusting, as you say, in His providence and will, without anxiety, without application, without choice, without any desire whatever, except that Our Lord may accomplish His holy will in and by it, without hindrance or resistance on its part. O God! who will give me this grace, if not Thou, O good Jesus, at the prayer of Thy servant!"

THE BLESSED FATHER.

"May God be propitious to you, my dearest child! The babe in the arms of its mother lets her do what she will with it, and only clings to her neck."

THE DAUGHTER.

"Does not Our Lord take particular care to prescribe all that is requisite and necessary for the soul that has thus placed itself in His hands?"

THE BLESSED FATHER.

"Souls in this state are dear to Him as the apple of His eye."

THE DAUGHTER.

"Ought it not to receive everything, even the least, as coming from His hand, and also ask counsel of Him in every necessity?"

THE BLESSED FATHER.

"In this respect, God wishes us to be like little children. We should be careful not to fall into excess by anxiously seeking to know the divine will in all the details of ordinary and trifling actions."

THE DAUGHTER.

"Would it not be a good practice to be careful, though without forced attention, to remain tranquil in the will of God on those many little occasions that thwart us, and are calculated to vex us (for great occasions are seen from afar), such as being prevented from enjoying a consolation that seems necessary or useful, or from performing some good action, some mortification, or something else that appears to be good, and instead of which we do nothing; and, perhaps, too, when what prevents or diverts us from this good action is either useless, dangerous, or bad?"

THE BLESSED FATHER.

"No consent is to be given to what is evil, and indifference in the other points ought to be practised. In all things submit to the guidance of God's providence."

THE DAUGHTER.

"Should I not be faithful and prompt to observance and obedience to the Rules at the first sound of the bell? There are so many occasions for little mortifications. The bell surprises in the middle of an account or of some action hard to interrupt. I must not, then, stop to take a few stitches which would finish the work, or to add one letter to a word, or to warm myself a moment, and the like?"

THE BLESSED FATHER.

" Yes, it is good to attach one's self to nothing so much as to the Rules; so, then, unless some important reason should prevent you, go when the Rule calls you, and endeavor to render it more powerful than all those little things."

THE DAUGHTER.

" Should I not allow myself to be governed absolutely in what regards the body, receiving simply whatever is given or done to me, whether suitable or not (since it would be granting too much to my own judgment to notice it), without saying a word or showing the least displeasure? Should I not take the relief afforded by sleep, rest, warming myself, exemption from some painful exercises or mortification? Should I not say simply what I can do, and then, if they insist, yield without another word? This point is important and difficult for me."

THE BLESSED FATHER.

" We should say simply what we feel, but in such a way as not to take from those that have care of us confidence and courage to answer. In a word, it is my earnest wish that your heart may be perfectly tractable."

THE DAUGHTER.

" Should I not be very condescending to the will of others, as soon as known, even when I might easily evade the opportunity? It is somewhat difficult to grant nothing to self; for how often we should like a little solitude, repose, and time to one's self! But here comes a Sister who wants this quarter of an hour, who wants a word, a caress, a little talk, or I know not what."

THE BLESSED FATHER.

" You should take the proper time for yourself, and after that avail yourself of every opportunity of condescending to the wishes of the Sisters."

THE DAUGHTER.

"I ask, for the honor of God, assistance in humbling myself. I think I ought to be attentive to say nothing that might redound, in any manner whatever, to my own praise or esteem."

THE BLESSED FATHER.

"Do this, and thou shalt live. *Amen.*"

Behold the fruits of prayer, behold its proofs! Humility, detachment from self, obedience, holy indifference to everything—these are its signs. Those raptures, that long and silent contemplation, that remission in God, all that sacred tenderness of divine love, have an infallible touchstone. They mature the soul and raise it gradually, but surely, to the highest degrees of union with God. Mother de Chantal fully comprehended this, and explained it excellently well to her daughters. After having described with her ordinary clearness the prayer of quiet, or of repose, of simple regard, she added: "I will give you the marks by which you may tell whether your repose and quiet in prayer come from God." And she indicated seven, which souls raised by Almighty God to this sublime state should deeply meditate.

"The first is, if, after you have taken your subject of meditation as usual, you cannot make use of it, but feel, without artifice on your part, your heart, mind, and inmost soul sweetly drawn to this sacred repose.

"The second, if, in the midst of this consolation, you learn to obey God and your Superiors without exception, to depend entirely upon Divine Providence, and to have no other will than the divine will.

"The third, if this repose detaches you from creatures to unite you to the Creator.

"The fourth, if it renders you more sincere and candid in manifesting your interior.

"The fifth, if, notwithstanding the sweetness you receive in this sacred repose, you are ready to endure dryness and aridity of spirit when God sends them, also to make use of considerations when He wishes you to do so.

"The sixth, if this attraction makes you more patient and

desirous of suffering, without wishing other relief or satisfaction than that afforded by your Spouse.

"The seventh, if this repose, this loving sleep, makes you more humble, makes you despise the world and yourself and esteem nothing but humiliation, labor, and the cross." [1]

We see by these words of profound wisdom that St. Chantal was not the only member of the new Order attracted to this kind of prayer. Many of her daughters experienced the same divine operation. In the course of this history we shall see the ecstasies of Mother Anne-Marie Rosset, the raptures of Mothers de Beaumont and de la Roche, the ineffable consolations of Mother de Châtel, the terrible, though heaven-sent, dereliction of Mother Favre, and in nearly all the Sisters of the Visitation the most extraordinary gifts of prayer. The prayer of quiet, in particular, was very common amongst them. "The more I see, the more I am convinced that Our Lord leads nearly all the Sisters of the Visitation to the prayer of simple union, a simple abiding in the presence of God, by an entire abandonment of themselves to His holy will, . . . a prayer that our Blessed Father calls *the prayer of simple surrender to God*." [2] In another place she says: "The almost universal attraction of the Sisters of the Visitation is a very simple attention to the presence of God and entire abandonment into His hands, . . . and I might well omit the *almost*, for I have remarked that all who apply to prayer as they should are drawn to it from the very first." [3]

St. Francis de Sales, filled with admiration at these wonders, though at the same time disquieted, for, remarked St. Chantal, "this attraction was so strong, that when the soul was drawn from that state it seemed to be wrenched from its centre, lost all liberty of spirit, and became involved in a species of constraint which deprived it of peace and greatly retarded its progress;" [4] St. Francis de Sales, I say, fearing to leave his daughters without direction in points so grave, resolved to compose a great work in which he would explain with all the clearness of which he was capable the divine

[1] De Maupas: *La Vie de la Vénérable Mère J. F. Frémyot*, book iii. chap. iv.
[2] *Réponses de Sainte Chantal*, p. 517
[3] *Ibid.* p. 519.
[4] *Coutumier de la Visitation*, p. 510.

operations of grace. He spoke of it to St. Chantal, who, overjoyed at the thought, earnestly encouraged him to pursue his project. She began at once to pray and to have prayers said for its success.

It was no easy task. Many great saints had, at different periods, described these wonders of divine love; and, only a short time before, Spain had given birth to that mystic school which has never yet had a rival. St. Peter of Alcantara, John of Avila, Blessed Louis of Granada, St. John of the Cross, Louis de Léon, and, greater than all, St. Teresa, had celebrated the divine union of the Creator and the creature in thought, sentiment, and style as sublime as the subject. But it was then as it is now. After the appearance of those immortal books, "*Les Noms Divins*," "*La Montée du Carmel*," "*Le Mémorial*," "*Le Château de l'Âme*," after the publication of "*L'Amour de Dieu*," of "*États d'Oraison*," of "*Lettres Spirituelles*" of Bossuet and Fénelon, the work still bristled with difficulties and was, assuredly, the most arduous that could be undertaken by the human mind. There are some lines in the "*Treatise on the Love of God*" for the composition of which, St. Francis de Sales declared, he had been obliged to read more than twelve hundred folio pages.

The matter of the work presented not the only difficulty; in vain did the holy Bishop seek the leisure demanded for it. Surrounded by crowds constantly claiming his advice, overwhelmed by a widespread European correspondence on spiritual matters, so pressed by business that he wrote, "The affairs of this province flow not in waves, but in torrents," he was frequently tempted to renounce his project. Fortunately, St. Chantal was there incessantly spurring him on. She wrote him note after note, short and energetic, to incite him to continue his work, joyously thanking him when he resumed his pen, complaining when urgent business obliged him to lay it aside, and, to quote St. Francis de Sales' own words, holding the sword to his throat and leaving him not a moment's rest.

Thus urged, he determined to finish the book, and, for this end, gave to it the whole of 1615 and the early part of 1616. Such were his faith, piety, and lively sentiment of the things of God that his tears flowed almost constantly as he wrote.

He was often obliged to lay aside his pen to give free vent to them. Sometimes his face sparkled with light. One day in particular, the 25th of March, whilst treating of the infinite love that had led the Son of God to become man, a globe of fire appeared above his head and enveloped it in splendor. But his prudence and humility were so great that every page he wrote, even after prolonged meditation, was submitted to the criticism of Bishops, theologians, and religious. He trusted neither his own judgment, his own industry, nor even the evident proofs God gave him of His assistance.

Thus was finished that celebrated "*Treatise on the Love of God*," in which St. Francis de Sales shows himself, by turns, a philosopher, a poet, an orator, and a theologian. He unites to the richest imagination a style most brilliant in its very simplicity, a plan most exact and full, solidity of doctrine and precision of expression which elicited admiration when, fifty years after, there arose those vehement and thorny discussions on *Quietism*. But if in this work we find a philosopher, a poet, and a theologian of the highest order, what shall we say of the saint? None but a heart inflamed with divine love could so perfectly understand, feel, and express all the delicate operations of that love in souls. When the "*Introduction to a Devout Life*" appeared, the holy Bishop's friends desired him to write nothing more, in order not to risk the reputation it had gained for him. After the publication of the "*Treatise on the Love of God*," every one hoped that he would never again lay down his pen; and not only France, Italy, Spain, the Catholic nations, but even England and its heretical king, James I., could not restrain a cry of admiration.

Composed for the daughters of St. Chantal, and at their earnest request, the "*Treatise on the Love of God*" is, consequently, a part of their history. It belongs to them, also, by another title. They were not only for St. Francis de Sales an incentive in his task,—they served him, also, as models. In describing the birth, progress, and all the beautiful operations of divine love in souls, the holy Bishop portrayed his daughters. He depicted their interior, which he knew so well and which God filled with the rarest graces,

It was Mother Anne-Marie Rosset who furnished him with the principal features of the sixth, seventh, and eighth books of *Theotime*. He thought of Mother de Châtel when he so charmingly described the caresses of divine love in innocent souls. Mother de la Roche showed him its ecstasies; Mother de Beaumont, its calm joy; Mother de Bréchard, its consuming ardor; and Mother Favre, its trials and terrible dereliction. As to Mother de Chantal, the model of all the others, we may say that, from the first to the last line of this great work, St. Francis de Sales never for an instant lost sight of her. The counsels he had given her orally or in writing, the ingenious comparisons by which, from time to time, he had explained to her the state of her soul, even long quotations from letters he had addressed to her, are found, word for word, and on every page of the book. This made him say to her in confidence: "The book on the *Love of God*, my dear child, was written especially for you." And again: "It is for you and such as you that I have written the *Treatise on the Love of God*."

The Bishop could not deny himself the consolation of acknowledging, even in public, at whose request he had undertaken this task and by what models he had perfected it. In his preface, a most lovely and ingenuous production, as was everything that came from his pen, after having mentioned the great writers of the past whom he had consulted, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, Blessed Denis the Carthusian, St. Catherine of Genoa, and St. Catherine of Siena; and, of his own day, Father Louis of Granada, "that great doctor of piety," the celebrated Cardinal Bellarmine, and above all the glorious St. Teresa of Jesus, "who so admirably describes the operations of divine love;" after having indicated those abundant well-springs from which he had freely and copiously drawn, he referred to another source, hidden from the world and quite unknown to it, namely, the interior of his Visitandine daughters. He notifies his "dear reader" that there is in the little town of Annecy a Congregation of maidens and widows, whose piety and innocence filled him with consolation; that he often visited them to talk of God, which obliged him to treat of the most delicate points of piety. "A great part of what I now communicate to you,

my dear reader," he continues, "I owe to that blessed Congregation. The Mother who presides over it, knowing that I was writing on this subject, and that, owing to my many duties, I could with difficulty finish it, unless with God's special help, herself prayed unceasingly and induced others to pray for that intention. She perseveringly besought me to consecrate every moment of my leisure to the task. This soul, whom I revere for reasons known to God, has had much influence over me in this undertaking. I had long contemplated writing on sacred love, though the plan I first proposed to myself was far inferior to the one I have just matured; and this, in imitation of the ancient Fathers, I candidly acknowledge."

We see that God refused no grace to the rising Visitation. After having so carefully selected the Mother and the first Sisters of the Institute and drawn them in so wonderful a manner from the world, not satisfied with leading them into solitude and exposing them to the assaults of holy love, he inspired the greatest doctor of the day to unveil to them its mysteries. The same hand that had traced their *Constitutions* wrote the *Treatise on the Love of God.* The most sublime flight of contemplation, as well as the first step in the religious life, thus received its rules; and in view of this delicate forethought of Divine Providence, it was not difficult to predict wonders.

APPENDIX.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF ST. CHANTAL'S FAMILY.

OGER FRÉMYOT, lived in Dijon, 1445.

RENÉ FRÉMYOT, Warden of the Mint in Dijon, 1479.

RENÉ II. FRÉMYOT, Auditor of Accounts in Dijon, died 1518.

JEAN FRÉMYOT, Lord of Saulx and Joint Lord of Barrain, Counsellor in Parliament, 1529, married Guillemette Godran, daughter of Philibert Godran and of Michelle Berbisey.

- **CLAUDE FRÉMYOT**, Lord of Is-sur-Tille, Pres. of the Exchcq. in Dijon, married Marthe de Berbisey.
  - CLAUDE II FRÉMYOT, Chief Judge, married, 1st, Jeanne de Souvert; 2nd, Madeleine Bretagne, and died without issue.
- ANDRÉ FRÉMYOT, Counsellor in Parliament, married Guillemette Tabourot, died without issue.
- BÉNIGNE FRÉMYOT, Lord of Thotes, Chief Judge in Dijon, 1581, married Marguerite de Berbisey.
  - MARGUERITE FRÉMYOT, mar. Jean Jacques de Neufchèzes, Baron de Bussy and des Francs, in Poitou.
    - Marie de Neufchèzes, mar. François Blondeau, Lord of Chassagne, Chief Judge. No male issue.
      - Marguerite Blondeau, Ursuline Nun, Dijon, died in 1713.
    - Bénigne de Neufchèzes, died without issue.
    - N. de Neufchèzes, died in the army. No issue.
    - Jacques de Neufchèzes, Lord de Bussy, Bishop of Châlon-s.-Saône, died in 1650.
  - ***St. Jeanne-Françoise FRÉMYOT***, married CHRISTOPHE DE RABUTIN, Baron of Bourbilly, Lord de Chantal, 1592.
    - Celse-Bénigne de Rabutin, Baron de Chantal, mar. Marie de Coulanges, and was killed at the Isle of Rhé, July 22, 1627.
      - Marie de Rabutin, mar. Henri, Marquis de Sévigné, died 1696.
        - Françoise-Marguerite de Sévigné, mar. François-Adhémar de Monteil, Count de Grignan.
          - Françoise-Marguerite, Visitation Nun, born 1669, died 1730.
          - Pauline de Grignan, married the Marquis de Simiane.
            - Anne de Simiane, Religious Calvaire at Paris.
            - Sophie de Simiane, mar. N. de Villeneuve, Marquis de Vence.
            - N. Marquis de Simiane, mar., 1st, N. Turpin, 2nd, N. de Blez.
            - N. de Simiane, mar. N. de Castellane, died in 1728.
          - Louis de Provence, Count de Grignan, mar. Marie de Saint-Amand, and died without issue.
        - Charles, Marquis de Sévigné, mar. Marguerite de Bréhan, and died without issue.
    - Two children died in infancy.
    - Françoise de Rabutin, mar. in 1622, Antoine, Count de Toulongeon.
      - Gabrielle de Toulongeon, mar. Roger de Rabutin, Count de Bussy, her cousin.
      - François, Count de Toulongéon, mar. Bernarde de Pernas, and died without issue.
    - Charlotte de Rabutin, died young.
    - Marie-Aimée de Rabutin, mar. Bernard de Sales, Baron de Thorens, died without issue.
    - Jacqueline de Rabutin-Bussy, Nun of the Visitation.
    - Louise-Françoise de Rabutin-Bussy, mar., 1st, Gilbert de Langeac, Marquis de Coligny; 2nd, Henri de la Rivière, Lord de Coucy.
      - Marie-Roger de Langeac, Marquis de Coligny and Andelot, mar. in 1700 Jeanne-Baptiste, Palatine de Dio.
        - Claudine-Jeanne de Langeac-Coligny, Benedictine Nun.
        - Gabrielle de Langeac, Benedictine Nun.
        - Marie-Louise Éléonore de Langeac, mar. Claude-Eléazar de la Guiche, Count de Sivignon.
          - N. de la Guiche, Abbess of Bonneval-lez-Touars in Poitou.
          - N. de la Guiche, Colonel in Condé's Regiment.
          - N. Count de la Guiche, mar. a legitimized daughter of the Prince de Condé, of whom he has one daughter.
          - N. de la Guiche-Sivignon, Bernardine Nun at Clermont in Auvergne.
        - Three sons and four daughters died young.
        - Françoise-Charlotte de Langeac, mar. Marquis de Dampierre-Cugnac, in Périgord.
        - Claudine-Élizabeth-Agnès de Langeac, Bernardine Nun at Clermont.
    - Diane-Charlotte de Rabutin-Bussy, Benedictine Nun, Abbess of Pralon.
- JEAN FRÉMYOT, Prior-Gen. of Val-des Choux, near Chatillon in Burgundy.
- ANDRÉ FRÉMYOT, Abbé of St. Étienne of Dijon, Archbishop of Bourges, died in Paris, May 13, 1641.
- MICHELLE FRÉMYOT, mar. Jean le Compasseur, Pres. of the Exchequer, and died without issue.

NOTES AND VOUCHERS

FOR VOLUME I.

NOTE I.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF ST. JEANNE-FRANÇOISE FRÉMYOT DE CHANTAL'S ANCESTORS AND POSTERITY.

(*See page* 68.)

THE Genealogical Table given on the opposite page was drawn up about the year 1751, by order of the Apostolic Commissaries appointed for the process of St. Chantal's canonization. It is useless to insist upon the value of this Table, for the circumstances that called for it demanded the greatest attention. Moreover, the items contained in it evidently rest upon the authority of the saint's relatives, who, at the date mentioned above, were very numerous and separated from her by four generations only. Consequently, in several points we have unhesitatingly accepted its testimony, in preference to the opposite rendering of facts by biographers; for we may readily believe that Mother de Chaugy, for example, did not inquire into the history of the saint's ancestors with the exactitude employed by the Apostolic Commissaries. It was a point quite foreign to the interest which enlisted her pen in the composition of her *Mémoires*, and it was quite easy for her memory to become perplexed in a matter of secondary importance in her plan. Besides helping us to correct errors, this Table has furnished us with more than one important date, with the names of individuals not even mentioned by the saint's historians, all very useful to us in clearing doubtful points. The only thing to be regretted is that the Table ends too soon and deprives us of the pleasure of tracing St. Chantal's posterity to the present day. But it is precisely this that strengthens its authenticity. We could have completed it, it is true, and, for a moment, we thought of doing so; but, upon reflection, we gave up the idea. This conclusion was the effect, not so much in view of the labor such a task would entail, as of the

respect due the pretensions of a great many families claiming descent from St. Chantal, which claims it would have been very difficult to confirm and very painful to gainsay.

NOTE II.

Birthplace of St. Chantal.

(*See page* 69.)

There exists no doubt upon the question of St. Chantal's birthplace. Her historians are unanimous upon this point, and she herself, on several occasions, particularly in her evidence at the process of the canonization of St. Francis de Sales, asserted that she was "a native of Dijon, the capital of the Duchy of Burgundy."

But, though certainly born in Dijon, where, in which street, and in which house?

Her biographers do not say; and the witnesses at the process of her canonization merely stated that she was born in her father's house, "*in domo paterna.*" But where was this house?

If we knew in which church St. Chantal was baptized, it would be a good starting-point in search of the house in which she was born; but, unfortunately, this second point is almost as obscure as the first. All the records of the parishes of Dijon anterior to the year 1600 have disappeared; and as early as the year 1722 the Apostolic Commissaries made useless efforts to find the certificate of her baptism. The witnesses who deposed their testimony at the process of her canonization did not supply the loss of the record. Some merely stated that she was baptized in her parish, without naming it, and others, whilst affirming that she had certainly been baptized, expressly declared that they knew not in which church. In fine, her historians, Mother de Chaugy, Bishop de Maupas, and Canon Marsollier, all keep to this phrase: "The Blessed Mother de Chantal was born in the city of Dijon," to which they add the following still more indefinite words: "Our holy child was forthwith regenerated in the sacred waters of Baptism."

There is, therefore, no written monument to designate the street and house in which St. Chantal was born. Tradition is, consequently, our only source. Let us see whether it will throw some light upon the point.

Tradition indicates two houses, one situated in Rue Jeannin No. 1, the other on the site now occupied by the prefecture.

What conclusion is to be drawn from this twofold tradition?

In the first place, with regard to that attached to the house in Rue Jeannin, there really stands, at No. 1, a beautiful mansion, part of

which dates back to the fourteenth century, at least; but the whole was repaired and ornamented in the style of Francis I. The exterior is in a state of perfect preservation. For a long time a portrait of André Frémyot, Archbishop of Bourges, was shown in this house, in which, it is said, his holy sister was born. But we shall see that this tradition, if an erroneous opinion entertained by a few can be so termed, rests upon no foundation, and that it is easy to explain its origin.

In fact, this mansion never belonged to St. Chantal's father, President Bénigne Frémyot, as the tradition would lead us to believe. It belonged to his brother, M. Claude Frémyot, who, also, was called President Frémyot after he was placed at the head of the exchequer. Moreover, Claude Frémyot did not purchase this mansion until the year 1579, seven years after St. Chantal's birth;[1] and as the city records prove that he did not occupy it as a tenant before that time, it is evident that St. Chantal was not born there. But as Claude Frémyot was our saint's uncle, and as, moreover, M. de Berbisey, our saint's maternal grandfather, lived about this time with M. Claude Frémyot, it is natural to suppose that the little Jeanne-Françoise often visited the house. Later, after Madame de Chantal, then a widow, had returned to Dijon, we find Claude Frémyot regarding her children with the warmest affection, above all Celse-Bénigne, whom he wished to have always with him, and whom he somewhat spoiled, as we see from our saint's letters. In fine, in the year 1604, when St. Francis de Sales went to Dijon to preach the Lenten course, he contracted an intimate friendship with M. Claude Frémyot, whom he often visited, and at whose house he must have frequently met Madame de Chantal. We may readily understand how this mansion grew into a souvenir of our saint, became a place of pilgrimage for pious Christians, and in the minds of the uninstructed thus gradually gave rise to the opinion that she was born there.

This opinion, however, was by no means general; and toward the year 1774 Courtépée established one more generally received. After having described the Brion mansion, which was destroyed to make room for the building now used as a prefecture, he adds: "A part of this edifice is built upon the site occupied by the Frémyot mansion, the residence of the illustrious President of that name, and in which his daughter, St. Jeanne-Françoise de Chantal, was born."[2]

We should like to adopt this opinion and see our young saint bap-

[1] See the title-deeds of this house, which now belongs to the widow Madame Fort. Among these documents is the very deed by which the property was made over to M. Claude Frémyot, May 30, 1579.

[2] *Description du Duché de Bourgogne*, by Courtépée, new edition, book ii. p. 56.

tized and making her First Communion in that lovely church of Notre-Dame, at the foot of the black statue of the Blessed Virgin, so celebrated in Dijon; but, unfortunately, positive proofs demonstrate too clearly that this second tradition has no better foundation than the first.

There now exists in the archives of the city of Dijon a large collection of records containing lists of all the taxes, of every nature, imposed from the time of King John to the revolution of 1793.[1] Each list is arranged according to the parishes. All the inhabitants, whether exempt from taxation or not, are inscribed upon them, not in alphabetical order, but according to an itinerary of the streets, which has not varied since the end of the fourteenth century.

Now, a study of these lists makes it evident that President Frémyot never occupied in the street in which the prefecture stands the mansion Courtépée gives as his residence and the house in which our saint was born. Of the two parts that compose the old mansion in question, the southern portion belonged, in 1550, to Odinet Dimanche, a citizen of Dijon. He sold it in 1560 to Jean Malyon, whose children owned and occupied it a number of years. The northern part, which, it is said, stands where President Frémyot lived, was occupied as follows: from 1563 to 1565, by M. Philippe de Villers; in 1566 and the following year, by M. Africain de Beaumont; in 1571, by Councillor Mouleron; in 1572 and 1573, by Guillaume Joly and Louis Cardeur; in 1574, by M. de Vantoux.

Evidently, as President Frémyot did not live in the house in question in the years 1571, 1572, 1573, and 1574, within which period his three children were born, the tradition connected with it is unfounded.

This argument is sufficient to establish the fact, but we shall add a circumstance that will render it irrefragable. In the record of taxes for the parish of Saint-Médard in the same years 1571, 1572, and 1573, we find the name of M. Bénigne Frémyot, then at the head of the exchequer. He is registered as occupant of a house in Rue Trésor, which must have been very near the palace, for it is marked on the record contiguous to the dwelling of the librarian, Antoine Grangier, who, it is known, lived nearly opposite the palace.

M. Bénigne Frémyot was not the eldest son of the family, and he did not own the hereditary mansion, supposing there was one. The house in which we find him in 1571 is a rented house. In 1572, the year of St. Chantal's birth, and in 1573, that of André Frémyot's birth, he is still there. Nor did he leave it until the year 1576, when he moved into another rented house, situated on Rue Vauban, in the neighborhood of the Bouhier mansion.

[1] The author acknowledges the services of the learned archivist, M. Joseph Garnier, in the study of this collection of taxes.

It appears to us, therefore, incontestable that St. Chantal was born in the parish of Saint-Médard, Rue Trésor, near the palace.

But at the period of our saint's birth, the Church of Saint-Médard was half in ruins; it could not decently serve as a place of worship. Several attempts had been made to rebuild it; but the civil and religious wars of the epoch so completely paralyzed every step taken toward its restoration, that the curate and wardens of the parish were forced to solicit permission from the gentlemen attached to Saint-Étienne, to perform parochial services in their church. This permission was granted by a formal contract in 1571, precisely one year before St. Chantal's birth; and from that time forward baptisms, marriages, burials, Paschal Communion, and all other parochial duties and rites, were performed in the abbatial church of Saint-Étienne. The conventual Mass served for the parochial Mass at first, but an altar was soon erected in the south wing of the church and dedicated to Saint-Médard, and thenceforward the parishioners assembled in that part of the nave. This arrangement lasted more than two hundred years.

Now, as St. Chantal was born in 1572, in Rue Trésor, the parish of Saint-Médard, it is evident that she must have been baptized in the church of Saint-Étienne; and since President Frémyot did not move out of the parish when he changed his residence, in 1576, to Rue Vauban, where he remained until the year 1583, we maintain that our saint made her First Communion in the same church.

These points present no room for doubt; and it is, moreover, easy to account for the fact that no tradition concerning them has been preserved. Instead of being rebuilt, as was constantly proposed, the church of Saint-Médard was entirely demolished in 1676. The Rue Trésor also disappeared, and the large lots around the palace were built up. President Frémyot's house was either destroyed to make room for the new buildings, or lost sight of in the great change that took place in the neighborhood. Besides, this house did not belong to him. He had occupied it only four or five years at most, having left it in 1576, when St. Chantal was four years old. Is anything more required to explain how and why no remembrance is had of the spot of our saint's birth?

There are other difficult points, besides the place of her birth, upon which we should wish to throw light. Where did she live when she went to Dijon after her marriage, at the time, for example, of her first meeting with St. Francis de Sales? But, above all, in which house did she bid her venerable father good-bye and step over her son's body, on leaving the world to become a religious?

To answer this question, it would be necessary to indicate precisely and unquestionably the dwelling occupied by President Frémyot from 1596 to 1610, for it was with him that Madame de Chantal

always stopped when she went to Dijon to spend some of the winter months. Moreover, all her historians expressly say that the farewell scenes took place in her father's house. Considerable difficulties present themselves upon this point.

We have seen that President Frémyot changed his residence, in 1576, from Rue Tresor to Rue Vauban, where he took a house in the neighborhood of that later occupied by President Bouhier. He was still in the parish of Saint-Médard. He remained in Rue Vauban until 1582, when he was nominated President of the Parliament. This incident led him, in all probability, to think of choosing a finer dwelling, for he moved to the parish of Notre-Dame, Rue du Vertbois (Rue Verrerie), near his brother M. Claude, who, as we have already stated, had purchased a residence in Rue des Fols (Rue Jeannin, No. 1). It may be presumed that he remained there until the year 1589, and that, consequently, the marriage of Marguerite Frémyot with the Baron des Neufchèzes, in 1586 or 1587, took place in the parish of Notre-Dame. St. Chantal, then about fifteen years old, was present at the ceremony.[1]

In 1589 President Frémyot withdrew from the League, which had degenerated from its first principles, and whose members at that date governed the Parliament and city. He was, in consequence, obliged to leave Dijon, where his residence was pillaged, and retire to Thotes, in Auxois. He went later on to Semur, where he remained six years (1589–1595). It was during this interval that St. Chantal's marriage took place at Bourbilly.

Finally, in 1595, when Henry IV. victoriously entered Dijon, President Frémyot also returned to that city in triumph at the head of the Parliament of Flavigny; but, strange to say, although President of the Parliament and Mayor of the city, although the most important commissions were intrusted to him, and his name appears on every page of the history of his country, there is no farther mention of him either in the records of Notre-Dame or those of any other parish. It is impossible, therefore, to decide his place of residence by means of these tax-lists, upon which, however, all the inhabitants of Dijon, even those exempt from taxation, and particularly the officers of the Parliament and exchequer, are registered. The omission of President Frémyot's name continues from 1595 until 1611, the year of his death, that is, during the fifteen years we should most like to know where St. Chantal stopped when she visited Dijon.

How is this astonishing fact to be explained? In the following manner.

[1] We have not yet been able to discover the precise site of President Frémyot's residence in Rue Verrerie, but we are strongly inclined to think it was No. 1 Rue Chaudronnerie.

When President Frémyot returned to Dijon in 1595, Henry IV., as a recompense for his great services, wished to make him First President of the Parliament of Dijon. This favor having been refused, the King proposed to take him in the royal suite to Paris, and there place him in a responsible office. President Frémyot was inflexible; and in order to prevail upon the King to accept his refusal, he confided to his royal master his design of forsaking the world and receiving Holy Orders. Upon hearing this, Henry IV., in accordance with the custom of the times, presented him with the rich abbey of Saint-Étienne and the archbishopric of Bourges. President Frémyot accepted these favors, and went immediately to take up his abode at the abbey.

We learn this from Canon Pepin, a contemporary, who has left in his singular *Journal*, still unedited, most interesting details of men and events in Dijon at this epoch.

"On the 8th of January, 1596," says the Canon, "the States-General of the Duchy of Burgundy under Henry IV. was opened, Marshal de Biron presiding in His Majesty's name, and many great lords of the Church, the nobility, and the commons assisting. The opening speech was made, as usual, at Saint-Étienne, where also was celebrated the Mass of the Holy Ghost, which has always been said in the Holy Chapel. The rest of the meetings of the different degrees of the States-General were held at the Cordeliers, as President Frémyot, at that time mayor of the city and self-dubbed Abbé de Saint-Étienne, occupied the said abbey as a residence; on account of which they were obliged to seek and secure elsewhere a place of meeting."

Farther on he says: "On the 14th, M. Paris Bernard, Prior of Saint-Étienne, died. The abbey had fallen into his hands by the resignation of M. du Tillet, who held peaceable possession of it until he joined the Cistercian Order, when he resigned the said abbey to the said Bernard, who, however, did not take possession of it, *being prevented by President Frémyot, who fixed his residence in the said place by force, and occupied all the apartments attached to the abbey.*"

Lower down he continues: "During this month (May, 1596), President Frémyot, mayor of the city, had the foundations of the Portelle dug away. Fine stone and a large quantity of good materials were found there, which he stored away in the Abbey de Saint-Étienne, so that he styles himself Bishop of Bourges, Abbé de Saint-Étienne, President of the Parliament, Mayor of Dijon, and the first in Marshal de Biron's Council."

All three of the foregoing passages betray the irritated feelings of an old Leaguer who had not yet pardoned President Frémyot for his noble behavior during the troubles of 1589, and who was still smarting under the blow inflicted by his triumph. But the tone of the writer is of little importance here. Without stopping to examine the accusations of the Canon, let us profit by his manuscript to prove the

fact that, from the year 1596, President Frémyot occupied the abbé's residence at Saint-Étienne. It must have been very large, since there had been question of holding there the meetings of the General Assembly.

President Frémyot was, consequently, at this abbey when negotiating his entrance into the ecclesiastical state. It proved a difficult business, and failed for the following reason: President Frémyot had been twice married. After having lost St. Chantal's mother, Marguerite de Berbisey, he married soon again; but we have been able to find neither the date of his second marriage nor the name of his second wife. At the time of his application to be received into the ecclesiastical state, he was, it is true, a widower for the second time; but it is a law of the Church, dating from the very first ages of Christianity and indicated by St. Paul himself, that, if widowers are not excluded from Holy Orders, it is upon the express condition that they have not been married a second time, *unius uxoris virum*. Moreover, President Frémyot's second wife was a widow when he married her, and this alone was sufficient to prohibit his reception of Holy Orders.

He tried to obtain a dispensation; but his efforts being unavailing, he transferred his abbey and archbishopric to his son, André Frémyot, St. Chantal's brother. In this transfer, President Frémyot was only following the custom of the period in which he lived. The negotiation of the affair must have lasted a long time, since, at the beginning of the year 1604, André Frémyot was not yet a priest. He said his first Mass on Holy Thursday of this year, and at the church of Saint-Étienne, of which he became Abbot by his father's resignation of that title. Now, as President Frémyot had already been residing nine years at Saint-Étienne, we may conclude that he continued to live there until his death; for, on the one hand, André, appointed Archbishop of Bourges at the same time that he was named Abbot of Saint-Étienne, went to reside in his archiepiscopal city, and thus left the vast apartments of the abbey vacant; on the other hand, since his father's name does not appear on the tax-register from 1604 to 1611 any more than from 1596 to 1604, is it not reasonable to conclude that the President continued to reside at the abbey? This conclusion will appear quite natural to all who know that the buildings of St. Bénigne Abbey were occupied, in 1550, by President Lefévre, though with much less right than that of which President Frémyot availed himself at Saint-Étienne.

It was, therefore, at the residence of the commendatory Abbot of the oldest abbey of Dijon that Madame de Chantal passed, in 1601, her first year of widowhood; it was to this residence that she returned, in 1604, to hear the course of Lenten instructions preached by St. Francis de Sales in the Holy Chapel; it was here, in fine, that the large assembly of her relatives was held, June 29, 1611, and that the heroic parting of the mother from her son took place.

In order to throw full light upon all these facts, and perfectly to satisfy the claims of piety upon this point, it would be necessary, we well know, after having proved by contemporary texts that President Frémyot continued to live at the abbey from 1604 to 1611, to point out the very rooms occupied by St. Chantal. But how do this? Time has destroyed and renewed everything in the old edifice. The abbey was turned into a collegiate church, the collegiate church into the Bishop's palace, and the Bishop's palace, divided into lots, was sold as national property. Some dilapidated cloisters and a few feet of the old walls, together with an old door, under which we may be sure St. Francis de Sales, and perhaps St. Chantal too, often passed, are all that remains of the abbey, and even these remnants of the past are hidden, nay lost, in the new buildings. We are, therefore, forced to renounce the gratification of introducing our readers into the apartments occupied by St. Chantal and the halls sanctified by the great sacrifice of her final farewell to her family and the world.

NOTE III.

St. Chantal's Marriage Contract.[1]

(*See page* 90.)

"In the year one thousand five hundred and ninety-two, on the afternoon of the twenty-eighth day of the month of December, in the castle and stronghold of Bourbilly, before me, Boëdot, Notary-Royal of the bailiwick of Auxois, residing at Époisse, there appeared Sir Christophe de Rabutin, Lord-Baron of the said Bourbilly, son of Sir Guy de Rabutin, Knight of the Royal Orders, Gentleman of the King's bed-chamber in ordinary, Captain of a free company of fifty men-at-arms, Lord of Chantal and Sauvigny, and of the late Lady Françoise de Cosseret, his father and mother, by the authority, will, and consent of the aforesaid Lord de Chantal his father here present, on the one side; and Lady Jeanne Frémyot, daughter of Sir Bénigne Frémyot, Knight, King's Councillor in the Royal Council of State, President of the Parliament of Burgundy, Lord of Tôste, Beauregard and Genessy in part, and of the late Lady Marguerite Berbisey, her father and mother, likewise by the authority, will, and consent of the said Lord Frémyot her father, and by the advice of Sir Jean-Jacques

[1] This notarial copy of the original minute was taken by François Vallon, formerly head clerk of the court, in the bailiwick and chancery of Avallon, Royal-Notary Apostolic of the diocese of Autun, appointed for this end by Leonard Champion, Bachelor of the Sorbonne, Feb. 12, 1714, Arch-priest and Curate of Avallon, diocese of Autun, commissary in those parts. (*Archives du premier Monastère d'Annecy*, YY, tiroir 16, no. 19.)

de Neufchèzes, Lord of Effran and Neufchèzes, Baron of Brun-Buisson, Knight of the Royal Orders, Captain of a free company of fifty men-at-arms, and of Lady Marguerite Frémyot, his wife, and sister to the said future wife, and of the noble brother Jean Frémyot, Prior of the great Val-des-Choux, her uncle, they all being here present, on the other side; which parties have, of their own certain knowledge and because it hath so pleased them, said and declared that they have made and do make the compact, agreements, marriage articles, and other things belonging thereto, to wit: that the aforesaid Sir Christophe Rabutin and Lady Jeanne Frémyot, by the authority and with the consent above-mentioned, have promised and do promise to take and espouse each other in lawful wedlock according to the law of God and of the Holy Catholic Church, as soon as may be done; that in favor and contemplation of the said future marriage, and in order that it may take place and be accomplished, the same being consummated, the said intended spouses shall be and shall remain associated in community of all the movables which they possess or may hereafter possess and acquire, which association shall last without interruption during their said marriage, each a half; in favor of which marriage, the said Lord de Chantal the father, of his own free will, and because it hath so pleased him, by these presents, hath given and doth give forever for himself, his heirs, and those of his survivors having claims upon him, by form of a pure, perfect, and irrevocable donation, to the said Lord de Rabutin, his son here present, stipulating and accepting forever for him, his heirs, and those having claims upon him, the estate and seigniory of Sauvigny belonging to the said Lord de Chantal the father, as far as it reaches and as it is found, with all its privileges and appurtenances past and present, consisting in all jurisdiction, high, medium, and low, mixed rights of mortmain, houses, barns, orchards, inclosures, lands, meadows and woods, thickets, rivers, fee-farms, rents, taxes, and all other rights, revenues, and dependencies whatsoever, without redemption or any reserve to the said Lord donor, except the usufruct, and that during his natural life only, which he wishes and intends to be added to the estate three days before his demise, the said estate and seigniory being free and released of all taxes, liens, and mortgages whatsoever, being held by way of fief to the seigniory of Époisse and to none other; for the registering of which donation the said Lord de Chantal has made and constituted M. César Buttau his special and irrevocable attorney, for the purpose of demanding the said registering and of being sworn in conscience, as he has been by me, the said notary, that he has made this donation of his own free will without any instigation; and the said Christophe de Rabutin has also named M^e^ Hélie Mouchon, parliamentary attorney, his special attorney, for the purpose of accepting anew this donation on

his part, of demanding the said registering, and of making all declarations and oaths thereto necessary.

"Upon the said future wife shall be settled the sum of two hundred crowns annual income, to be drawn from the least encumbered estates of the said future husband, which she shall enjoy during her natural lifetime, as also the castle and stronghold of said Bourbilly, with the barns and inclosures of the same, and by way of dower.

"She shall, likewise, be furnished by the said Lord, her future husband, with rings and jewels to the amount of six hundred crowns.

"In the same manner, in behalf and in contemplation of the intended marriage, Lord Frémyot the father, for all the rights of said daughter both maternal and paternal, from male and female ancestors, either maternal already acquired, or paternal to be acquired, has promised and settled upon her as a marriage portion the sum of sixteen thousand six hundred and sixty-six crowns, two-thirds to be paid as follows, viz.: eight thousand crowns in acquittal and payment of a like sum due by the said future husband to Sir François de Rabutin, Knight, Lord of La Vault, Gexy, and Forclans, including arrears on account of the acquisition of the mills of the said Bourbilly, with which arrears the said Lord Frémyot is charged from this day, together with all those that may hereafter fall due according to and such as it may be found ought to be paid by the contract upon this point, and of which the said Lord Frémyot has acknowledged himself sufficiently informed, who will so act that the said future husband and his heirs may neither now nor in future be disturbed for the payment either of the said principal sum or others.

"Moreover, the said Lord Frémyot will pay the sum of two thousand crowns cash, and the balance of said dower, amounting to one thousand six hundred and sixty-six crowns—two-thirds after the decease of the said Lord Frémyot to be taken from his least encumbered property, it remaining, nevertheless, at the choice of the said future wife and of her children, should she precede her said father into eternity, either to be content with the said sum of sixteen thousand six hundred and sixty-six crowns, two-thirds for all rights personal, maternal, fraternal, and ancestral, or to receive her portion of the above-named inheritance and other property of which the said Frémyot shall be possessed on the day of his death, previously refunding whatever she shall have touched and received, or taking so much less, of which sum allotted above as a dower, the sum of one thousand crowns will be obtained from movables to be used in community by the said future spouses, and the surplus of the said dower obtaining as a proper good and share, an inheritance for the profit of the future wife and her heirs, *soit en chacun, ou lointain degré tout ainsi et en la même forme que si c'étoit héritage, action paternelle, ayant*

fait troc en la personne des ayeux de ladite future épouse, et à ces fins demeureront lesdits derniers assignez, et particulièrement par spéciale assignation sur lesdites terres et seigneureries de Bourbilly et Sauvigny, pour par ladite future épouse et ses hoirs en jouir par leurs mains jusques au remboursement et restitution desdits deniers dottaux sans qu'elle ni sesdits hoirs soient tenus préconter ou déduire les fruits desdits assignants particuliers sur le sort principal desdits deniers dottaux, sans qu'ils soient tenus en faire aucune confusion sur eux, et pour plus grande sûreté dudit douaire et assignat ledit sieur Chantal a voulu, et par ces presentes consent que, nonobstant ladite substitution, à laquelle la dite seigneurerie de Bourbilly y est affectée, ladite demoiselle future épouse et les siens en jouissent jusques à l'extinction dudit douaire et remboursement dudit assignat et toutefois ou desdits deniers dottaux restans à païer après le décès dudit sieur futur époux, icelui en acquérera héritage au nom et profit d'icelle future épouse et des siens, en ce cas il sera ensemblement sesdits hoirs déchargés d'autant dudit assignat.[1]

"The said future spouses shall be allowed to make to each other donations both absolute and mutual during their lifetime, as well as by will or before death by expressing their last wishes, of such effects as will have fallen to them.

"The surviving party of the said future spouses will, according to the articles of this marriage contract and before any division takes place, be entitled to all of his or her clothing, together with his or her room supplied with the best pieces of furniture they had held in common, or, instead of said room and furniture, to the sum of four hundred crowns. Should the future husband be the surviving party, he will, besides, be entitled to his arms and horses; and should the said future wife be the survivor, besides her clothing and furnished room as above stated, she will likewise, according to the terms of this contract, be entitled to all her rings and jewels of whatever value they may be, without any deduction being made on account of them, or if she prefer, in place of them, to the sum of six hundred crowns, as also to her carriage and four good horses, or instead of these, at her choice, the sum of four hundred crowns. The remaining part of this contract will be determined and regulated according to the general custom of the province and dukedom of Burgundy. Such is the will, agreement, and good pleasure of the said parties, who have promised on oath administered by me, the said notary, that they will abide forever by this contract in all its parts, without ever acting contrary to it, and to this effect they have submitted and pledged their goods both present and future before the Chancery Court of the dukedom of Bur-

[1] The foregoing lines are given in the original owing to the difficulty of their translation.

gundy, renouncing all things contrary thereto. Done and passed in the presence of Charles d'Esbares, Esquire, residing at present at Semur, and of Me Claude Faby, of Époisse, residing at present in the said castle, both being competent witnesses, who have signed together with the above parties, and also of Jean Coulon, Captain at the said castle of Bourbilly, who has signed in quality of witness. The said original minute is signed:

"Guy de Rabutin, Frémyot, Christophe de Rabutin, Jeanne Frémyot, Jean Frémyot, de Neufchèzes, as present; Frémyot, J. Frémyot, d'Esbares, Faby, J. Coulon, and F. Boëdot, notary."

NOTE IV.

Letter of St. Francis de Sales to the Honorable Viscount Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Dijon.[1]

(*See page* 164.)

"*To the Honorable Viscount Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Dijon.*

"My Lord and Gentlemen, I look upon your desire to have me in your city for the service of souls as a great favor conferred upon me, and I cannot imagine how this good fortune has befallen me, that you know my name and that there is such a being in the world. My astonishment at this is so much the greater as I am conscious of not deserving this favor, there being nothing in me to correspond to the opinion you have of me, except a great desire to increase God's glory and a deep affection for all who cherish the same desire; and, since I know that you hold an eminent rank in this class, I beg you to believe that I shall always be willing to avail myself of every opportunity of serving you. I shall, consequently, try to overcome every obstacle that may arise to prevent me from being with you at the time marked in your letter. But allow me to say that if it would be agreeable to you to limit your invitation to Lent, I should not have any difficulty in accepting it; for no obstacle would intervene. For Advent it would cost me much trouble to waive the great objections which oppose the extreme desire I have to satisfy you; and, nevertheless, rather than give you any reason to believe that I am unwilling to oblige you, I assure you now that, if you yourselves do not authorize me to remain here during Advent, I shall not do so any more than during Lent, but shall overcome every hindrance that might prevent me from being in your city at both times. I shall, then, await your answer, through the bearer of this; and, whatever your will may be, I shall act in accordance with it without regard to other circumstances.

[1] Archives of Dijon, *Correspondance municipale*, B. 22, registre XI. No. 39.

"May God, my Lord and Gentlemen, grant you an abundance of grace, and may He give me as much power as He has given me will to prove myself,

"Your most humble servant in Jesus Christ,

"FRANÇOIS,

"*Bishop of Geneva.*

"ANNECY, August 22, 1603."

NOTE V.

DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE PRINCIPAL MANUSCRIPTS USED IN THE COMPOSITION OF THIS LIFE.

(*See the Preface.*)

In the Preface and in some of the notes scattered throughout the work, we have mentioned the principal manuscripts used in the composition of this Life; but it will be useful, we think, to give here a full and accurate account of them. The reader will thereby see the truly historical character of the *Life of St. Chantal* and be justified in giving full confidence to the testimony presented in its pages. Besides, if ever the Convent of the Visitation in Annecy should be unfortunate enough to share the fate of other convents whose libraries and archives have been destroyed or scattered, this list will one day acquire a sad and new importance. It will be useful in tracing and, perhaps, recovering some of these valuable documents; for nearly all that compose this list belong to the Convent of the Visitation in Annecy. We shall limit our remarks to the MSS., with only an occasional mention of the printed books quoted, as a detailed notice of the latter would extend the list too considerably. Moreover, there is less risk of printed matter being lost.

1. "*Procès fait par Autorité Apostolique sur la Réputation de Sainteté, Vertus et Miracles de la vénérable Servante de Dieu, Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal,*" 6 vols. folio. (Process instituted by Apostolic authority concerning the reputation for sanctity, virtues, and miracles in which the venerable servant of God, Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal is held.) This collection contains, among other papers of the greatest importance, the entire testimony given by the witnesses sworn and heard, either by the authority of the Ordinary in the years 1715 and 1716, or by the Apostolic Commissaries in 1720, 1722, and the following years. This statement is sufficient to prove the inestimable value of such a document. In the preface of this *Life*, the reader has seen the concurrence of circumstances which kept this document closed by the seal of the Apostolic Notaries, and, consequently, unknown and un-

consulted until the administration of the late Bishop Rendu, Ordinary of the diocese of Annecy, who broke the seal and deposited the six volumes in the archives of the Convent of the Visitation. It is just to say, however, that if no French historian has hitherto had recourse to this authority, an Italian writer has made use of it through a copy of the process of St. Chantal's Canonization kept in Rome. This Italian historian is Carlantonio Saccarelli, the author of a Life of St. Chantal, entitled, "*Vita della venerabile Madre Giovanno-Francesca Fremiot di Chantal, Fondatrice dell' Ordine della Visitazione di Maria; composta da Carlantonio Saccarelli de' Cherici Regolari Ministri degl' Infirmi. Nuova edizione, Milano,* 1845."

2. "*Proces fait par Autorité Apostolique sur la Réputation de Sainteté, Vertus et Miracles pour la Béatification et la Canonisation de Saint François de Sales,*" 6 vols. folio. (Process instituted by Apostolic authority on the sanctity, virtues, and miracles of St. Francis de Sales, for his beatification and canonization.) In the testimony given at the process for the beatification of the holy Bishop of Geneva, there are many things relating to St. Chantal. This is particularly the case when the deponents speak of the saintly prelate's visit to Dijon, the foundation of the Order of the Visitation, the compilation of its Rules, the increase of its houses, the death of the Founder, etc. It is here, also, that we find St. Chantal's testimony of the virtues practised by the holy Bishop of Geneva; and this testimony is so valuable that, without a study of it, no one need even hope to know the soul of the holy Foundress of the Visitation. M. de Baudry has recently published an excellent edition of these depositions. (Perisse, Paris, 1 vol. octavo, 1843.)

3. "*Recueil des Difficultés opposées à la Béatification et à la Canonisation de la vénérable Servante de Dieu Jeanne Frémyot de Chantal,*" 1 vol. folio. (A record of the difficulties presented to the beatification and canonization of the venerable servant of God, Jeanne Frémyot de Chantal.) This MS. is kept in the archives of the Convent of the Visitation in Annecy, and will be more fully referred to in the second volume of this Life. (Vouchers, Note I.)

4. "*Différents Mémoires écrits par la vénérable Mère de Chantal sur sa Vie, ses Peines intérieures ou ses Fondations.*" (Different *Mémoires* written by the venerable Mother de Chantal on her own life, her interior troubles, and the foundations made by her.) Some of these *Mémoires*, such as those that relate to St. Chantal's early secular life, to her interior troubles and the cares of her widowhood, were written by Mother de Châtel's direction. This holy religious was at that time Superioress of the Convent of the Visitation in Annecy, and deemed it a service due to God's glory not to allow the treasure of virtue hidden in our saint's heart to remain unknown. Unfortunately, the account we have of it is very short, either because some part of

the MS. has been lost, or because Mother de Châtel's death freed St. Chantal from the obligation of continuing her *Mémoires.* The latter supposition is the more probable. The portions of this manuscript collection that relate to the foundation of convents of the Order are a kind of *verbal process* of installation drawn up and written entirely by our saint herself upon the first page of the book appropriated to the Acts of the convent. The most important among them is that in which she describes the beginning of the Visitation in Annecy, from June 6, 1610, to the year 1618, when the new Institute was raised to a Religious Order. The autographs or old and authentic copies of these *Mémoires* are carefully preserved at Annecy. Only a part of them was inserted in the process of the saint's canonization.

5. "*Mémoire de feüe notre très-honorée Sœur, la Mère Françoise-Madeleine de Chaugy, professe de ce premier Monastère de la Visitation d'Annecy, en l'année 1630, Secrétaire de notre vénérable Mère de Chantal, et ensuite Supérieure de ce premier Monastère, pour la Vie de ladite vénérable Mère de Chantal,*" 1 vol. manuscript, folio, bound in parchment. (*Mémoire* by our late most honored sister, Mother Françoise-Madeleine de Chaugy, professed member of this first Convent of the Visitation of Annecy, in the year 1630, secretary of our venerable Mother de Chantal, and afterward Superioress of this first convent, written for the life of the said venerable Mother de Chantal.) The autograph MS. of these valuable *Mémoires* is still preserved at the first convent of Annecy. There are three authentic copies of it, viz. : one in the process of our saint's beatification ; the other in that of her canonization ; and the third, even fairer than the two already mentioned and likewise signed and paraphed by the Apostolic Notaries, but not attached to the papers of the beatification and canonization processes, is kept in the archives at Annecy. These very interesting *Mémoires,* the origin of which we have mentioned in the course of our work, were published in 1644, three years after St. Chantal's death, under the following title : "*La Vie de la Vénérable Mère Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot, Fondatrice, première Mère et Religieuse de l'Ordre de la Visitation de Sainte-Marie, par Henry de Maupas du Tour, évêque et comte du Puy,*" Paris, 1644. It appeared in a quarto volume and is nothing but Mother de Chaugy's work arranged, or rather changed, according to the editor's fancy, which, however, did not prevent its meeting with immense success at the time of its publication. It saw several editions. In our own day, the Abbé Boulanger, chaplain of the Convent of the Visitation of Mans, conceived the happy idea of republishing these *Mémoires* as they came from Mother de Chaugy's pen and, consequently, disencumbered of Bishop de Maupas' bad rhetoric. This edition has met with considerable success. Our only regret is that he did not see the necessity of publishing the beautiful protestation placed by Mother

de Chaugy at the beginning of her *Mémoires*. What he has given is, indeed, from Mother de Chaugy's pen, but it is only the first stroke, as it were, which she afterward developed in the following words: "I protest that I desire to give nothing but the plain and simple truth, such as I have received it, as well from our most worthy Mother de Chantal's own lips as from several other persons of whom we made inquiries long ago, particularly from M. Robert, Grand-Vicar of the Bishop of Châlons; M. Colon, steward of the De Chantal family; M. Daubeuton, an old servant of the Archbishop of Bourges; M. Goujon, of Autun, who was attached to the service of the De Chantal family, and from one of our most worthy Mother's maids; but principally from our most honored Sisters and Mothers Marie-Jacqueline Favre, Jeanne-Charlotte de Bréchard, Marie-Péronne de Châtel, Marie-Adrienne Fichet, Marie-Aimée de Blonay, the first subjects and companions of our most worthy Mother, who, in order that the truth might not unjustly be withheld and lest they might suddenly be surprised and prevented by death, placed their *Mémoires* in my hands in the year 1636. I have drawn the greater part of what I shall write in the following pages from these notes, as well as from declarations made to me by our dear Sister Madeleine-Elizabeth de Lucinge, Superioress of our convent in Turin, and our Sister Jeanne-Thérèse Picoteau, who almost always accompanied our worthy Mother. To all this I have added facts drawn from a number of *Mémoires* sent by our houses and remitted to me by our Sisters of Annecy, as also what I myself had remarked and faithfully collected for many years, particularly since the above-named year, 1636, when I was favored by being numbered among those who daily wrote under the dictation of this worthy Mother. I commence, then, in the name of Our Lord, Feb. 2, 1642, in this our first convent of Annecy.

"Sister Françoise-Madeleine de Chaugy."

In every point of view this preface is important. It gives us the date upon which Mother de Chaugy began her work, and which we find was only six weeks after St. Chantal's death. It shows us, also, the great precautions used by the writer not to fall into error in her statements. She would not trust to her own memory, but sought for information and confirmation of facts from all the first Mothers of the Visitation, and, not satisfied with even this, she questioned those that had known our saint in the world, and thus raised to the memory of the Foundress of her Order a valuable historical document, of which we have made great use and whose beauties we have extolled throughout the course of our work. If we might dare express a wish upon the subject, it would be that the next edition of these interesting

Mémoires be made from the autograph MS. itself, as we have proofs that the copy used for the present edition is abridged in several parts.

6. Two MSS. with the following titles: "*Vive Jésus! Premier Manuscrit de feüe notre très-honorée Sœur, la Mère Louise-Dorothée de Marigny, professe de ce premier Monastère de l'année 1623, touchant la Vie et les Vertus de N. V. Mère de Chantal.*" (Live Jesus! First MS. of our late most honored Sister, Mother Louise-Dorothée de Marigny, professed in this first convent in the year 1623, on the life and virtues of our venerable Mother de Chantal.) At the beginning of the second: "*Vive Jésus! Second Manuscrit de notre très-honorée Sœur la Mère Louise-Dorothée de Marigny, touchant la Vie et les Vertus de N. V. Mère de Chantal.*" (Live Jesus! Second MS. of our most honored Sister, Mother Louise-Dorothée de Marigny, on the life and virtues of our venerable Mother de Chantal,) Mother Louise-Dorothée de Marigny, one of the first religious of the Visitation, the Superioress and Foundress of several convents, and a woman of eminent virtue, was for many long years an eye-witness of St. Chantal's heroic actions. These two MSS., which have never been printed, were inserted in the process of the saint's beatification, vol. ii. p. 947. The first was probably written in 1637, in compliance with Mother de Châtel's request. The second was given into Mother de Blonay's hands five years later. It is in the form of a letter and begins with these words which, notwithstanding their modest style, give us an exact idea of the importance to be attached to the manuscript:

"MOST HONORED SISTER AND VERY DEAR MOTHER,

"The *Mémoire* which, in obedience to your charity's command, I am about to write upon the life and actions of our most dear and holy Mother, will present no order, since my leisure and my bad health do not allow me much time to devote to it, and, to speak more in accordance with truth, because my extreme ignorance renders me unfit for the task. I shall, therefore, say very simply and briefly what may come to my mind, believing that I shall only be saying what others know much better than I who have been only ten years in our blessed house of Annecy, during which period this holy Mother was often absent on foundations, a circumstance that prevented my always enjoying her presence."

7. A MS. with the following title: "*Vive Jésus! Manuscrit de feüe notre très-honorée Sœur Françoise-Angélique de la Croix, professe de ce premier Monastère en l'année 1624, touchant la Vie et les Vertus de notre vénérable Mère de Chantal.*" (Live Jesus! MS. upon the life and virtues of our venerable Mother de Chantal, written by our late most honored Sister Françoise-Angélique de la Croix, professed in this first convent in the year 1624.) The same may be said of Sister de la Croix that we have already said of

Mother de Marigny. She is a witness who occupied an admirable position for observation, since she lived nearly twenty years with our saint, and her eminent virtue is a guaranty for her sincerity. She commenced to write or, at least, to take notes, as early as the year 1631, ten years before St. Chantal's death. Her *Mémoire* commences thus: "In the name of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and in holy obedience, I am going to say truthfully and simply whatever I remember to have remarked or heard of the virtues of our holy Mother and Foundress, although others know the same things and more fully, having learned them from our blessed source (Annecy) and those of our other houses which we visited with her Charity (St. Chantal), and of which I took some rough notes in the years 1631 and 1632." The MS. closes with the following lines: "I affirm and protest that all that I have here collected and written down is according to my belief true, and that I have myself seen and heard the greater part of the things related, and which, in truth, are little or nothing compared with all I have seen and believe of this blessed Mother, whom I have always looked upon as a great saint." This *Mémoire* was inserted in the process of St. Chantal's canonization, vol. ii. p. 559.

8. A MS. bearing this title: "*Déclaration du noble Seigneur Georges-Hector de Vincent de Fességny, touchant la vénérable Mère de Chantal, du 1er décembre, 1659.*" (Declaration of the noble Lord Georges-Hector de Vincent de Fességny, concerning the venerable Mother de Chantal, drawn up on the 1st of December, 1659.) Hector de Fességny was the head syndic of Annecy during St. Chantal's residence in that town. His age and infirmities led him to fear that he might die before the process for the saint's beatification should have commenced; consequently he wrote this *Declaration* for the purpose of giving his evidence, even after death, of the holy Mother's sanctity. "Fearing," he writes, "lest the testimony for Mother de Chantal's beatification may not be taken before our departure from this world, taking into consideration our infirmity and age of sixty-seven years, we have wished to make the present declaration, which may be used after our death by the Commissaries appointed by His Holiness to receive the evidence necessary for her beatification." This MS., attached to his last will and testament and sealed with his seal, was enclosed in an envelope bearing the following inscription: "This paper contains the very words I have heard uttered by the most worthy Mother de Chantal, the Foundress of the Order of the Visitation, together with a reliable memorandum of some facts I have received from the lips of the Superiors of the Visitation; on account of which reliable source, I determined to write them down for the benefit and honor of the said Mother, in case our Holy Father, the Pope, should direct an examination to be made regarding her life and morals, with a view to her canonization, which I hope he will do,

as well as to the canonization of the Blessed Francis de Sales, her director. The whole has been written and signed by me, Hector de Fességny, which I affirm, as also to have sealed it within and without with my own seal, as a proof of the truth of all that I have written."

9. "*Mémoire de la Sœur de Clermont Mont-Saint-Jean, sur la Vie et les Vertus de la très-digne Mère de Chantal.*" (*Mémoire* written by Sister de Clermont Mont-Saint-Jean upon the life and virtues of the most worthy Mother de Chantal.) This quarto MS. is preserved in the archives at Annecy. Sister de Clermont, who made her vows September 6, 1626, and died five years before St Chantal, was the saint's secretary for several years. According to the testimony of the Venerable Mother de Chantal herself, this Sister was a person of rare ability and virtue, capable of being intrusted with every kind of employment, and worthy of great confidence. She accompanied the holy Foundress wherever she went, and took notes of all that happened. The result was a valuable *Mémoire* of the saint's private life.

10. "*Mémoire de la Mère Françoise-Hiéronyme Favrot, sur les Vertus de la Mère de Chantal.*" (*Mémoire* of Mother Françoise-Hiéronyme Favrot, upon Mother de Chantal's virtues.) This is not a very important quarto MS., treating particularly of the virtues of the venerable Mother, whom the writer had known only in the latter years of her life.

11. "*Recueil de ce qui s'est passé au Commencement de l'Institut à la petite Maison de la Galerie où nos premières Mères ont demeuré deux ans et demi ; Recueilli par notre très-honorée sœur Marie-Adrienne Fichet, septième Religieuse qui en a été témoin auriculaire et irréprochable.*" (Account of the incidents that occurred at the commencement of the Institute in the house called "The Gallery," where our first Mothers lived two years and a half, given by our most honored Sister Marie-Adrienne Fichet, the seventh religious of the Order, who was witness of all that is related and whose testimony is unexceptionable.) This quarto MS., No. 34 of the collection in the archives of Annecy Convent, although short, is replete with unction, piety, and simplicity.

12. "*Mémoire de Denys de Marquemont, Archevêque de Lyon, sur les Inconvénients de laisser la Visitation en forme de Simple Congrégation.—Réponse de l'Évêque de Genève (St. François de Sales) a un Mémoire à lui présenté par Denys de Marquemont, sur les Changements à faire à la Congregation de la Visitation.*" (*Mémoire* containing a statement of the difficulties that might arise if the Visitation be allowed to continue in the form of a simple Congregation ; written by Denys de Marquemont, Archbishop of Lyons.—The Bishop of Geneva's (St. Francis de Sales) answer to the *Mémoire* presented to him by Denys de Marquemont, on the changes to be made in the Congrega-

tion of the Visitation.) These two important MSS. are preserved in the convent of the Visitation at Annecy, and have never been published. The autograph manuscript of the first paper is lost, but the copy is in St. Chantal's own handwriting. The second paper also is written in old style handwriting, though not that of St. Francis de Sales.

13. "*Histoire des Fondations de l'Ordre de la Visitation Saint-Marie, par notre très-honorée Sœur, la Mère Françoise-Madeleine de Chaugy, composée ès années 1637 et 1638.*" (History of the foundations made in the Order of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, written by our most honored Sister, Mother Françoise-Madeleine de Chaugy in the years 1637 and 1638.) This is a folio MS. of one volume, and a work of very great value. It contains the account of the establishment of one hundred and fifty convents, either founded by St. Chantal herself or by others in her lifetime. It was written by her direction, under her own eyes, revised and corrected by her, and is, consequently, one of the purest and fullest sources for a history of the rising Visitation. We have made copious extracts from it, having found therein everything that was instructive, pleasing, and edifying—grace of style, ingenuousness, piety, and the greatest historical exactitude, for in it Mother de Chaugy relates what she herself had seen, and her pen was still under St. Chantal's control. It was particularly after the reading of this MS. that we determined to undertake the work we now present to the public.

14. "*Fondation Manuscrites de nos Monastères.*" (Manuscript foundations of our convents.) These MSS. consist of twenty quarto volumes, and are a continuation and supplement of the work described in No. 13.

15. "*Livre auquel les Sœurs de la Congrégation de Notre-Dame de la Visitation écrivent les Ans et Jours de leurs Oblations, Vœux et Rénovations qu'elles en font.*" (Book in which the Sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Visitation write the year and day of their oblation, vows and renovations.) This MS. folio volume has been of immense assistance to us in deciding the hitherto very confused chronology of St. Chantal's life.

16. "*Livre du Chapitre du premier Monastère d'Annecy, 1616–1694.*" "*Livre du Noviciat du deuxième Monastère d'Annecy, 1634–1789.*" "*Livre des Contrats permanents, 1612–1672.*" (Chapter-book of the first convent of Annecy, 1616–1694. Novitiate-book of the second convent of Annecy, 1634–1789. Book of permanent contracts, 1612–1672.) By the date of these MSS. the reader will be convinced of their inestimable value. They are the first books used in the foundation of the Order, and are looked upon as relics. On every page appear the signatures of St. Francis de Sales, St. Chantal, Mother de Bréchard, Mother de Châtel, Mother Favre, Mother de Blonay, etc.

17. "*Lettres autographiée et inédites de Saint François de Sales, de Sainte Chantal, de Mgr. André Frémyot, de M. de Sillery, de la Mère de Châtel, de la Mère de Blonay, etc., etc.*" (Autograph and unpublished letters from St. Francis de Sales, St. Chantal, Archbishop André Frémyot, Commander de Sillery, Mother de Châtel, Mother de Blonay, etc.) It is impossible for us to enter more into details here. All that we can say is that, under the foregoing title, we indicate one of the most precious treasures of the archives of Annecy. We dare not compute the number of St. Chantal's unpublished and unknown letters; but it is by no means inconsiderable. We may say the same of the letters addressed to her by Bishops and regulars, but particularly by the first Mothers of the Visitation. It is useless to remind the reader of the great light which this personal correspondence of our saint casts upon her life and the commencement of the Order of the Visitation. We have been obliged forcibly to resist our inclination to overload our narrative with quotations that were so much the more valuable in our eyes, as they are unknown. However rich the archives of Annecy are in this respect, they are very far from possessing a complete collection of St. Chantal's unpublished letters. There are few convents of the Order that have not some. They were shown to us everywhere we went.

The study of St. Chantal's autograph letters is absolutely necessary for one who undertakes to become her historian, for the different editions that have been given of them are not without defects.

The first edition, through Mother de Blonay's efforts, appeared in 1644, three years after St. Chantal's death. It contains four hundred letters, and bears the following title: "*Les Épitres spirituelles de la Mère Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot, baronne de Chantal, Lyon, chez Vincent de Cœur Silly, 1644.*" It is a quarto volume. It opens with a dedicatory letter by Mother de Blonay, which clearly explains how she proceeded to her work, and by what principles she was guided. "We have employed," she writes, "more than seven months in selecting and arranging the most useful letters, placing together points that bear reference to one another, and retrenching repetitions. Were we to print all the letters written by our incomparable Mother precisely as they have been sent to us, I believe the book would, without exaggeration, be larger than the combined Lives of the Saints. . . . Our endeavor has been to introduce into this volume only what is necessary or useful, or what may be read by every one. We mention this, because it has been judged expedient that we should be satisfied with retaining in manuscript many letters that would be useful only in very rare cases, or whose proper place is in the locked cabinet of charity. You will not be astonished to find few of her letters signed and dated, if you will please to remember that our

holy Mother scarcely ever dated her letters when travelling. . . . In fine, as this book is almost exclusively for us, my dearest Sisters, etc." Here we clearly see the principles, or, as would be said at the present time, the defects of this edition. First, it is a selection: the most useful letters have been taken and the others left. Secondly, it is a selection made for nuns: it was from this point of view that the choice was regulated. Thirdly, the editors, not satisfied with putting aside a large number as less useful, even curtailed those they did publish. Fourthly, they made one letter of several; for this is what Mother de Blonay means when she says "placing together points that bear reference to one another." For example, the 36th letter of the *Blaise edition* is composed of two letters, one addressed to Mother Lhuilier, the other to Commander de Sillery. Fifthly, nearly all the superscriptions were suppressed and replaced by the words, *To a Lady, To a Religious, To a Community, To a great Servant of God*, a necessary precaution at the time, only three years after St. Chantal's death, if they would not reveal the troubles, imperfections, and spiritual miseries of a large number of persons still living; but a precaution which, from a historical point of view, robbed the letters of half their value. Sixthly, most of these letters were not dated. The editors did not supply this deficiency, which they might have done then much more easily than at the present day. This defect notably diminishes the interest of these letters from a historical point of view.

We must not blame Mother de Blonay. She acted according to the custom of her time. Neither she nor any one else ever dreamed then of publishing letters as they are now published. Her only aim was to present her Order with a book of spiritual advice and reading, concise, solid, pious, containing all that was important for the Sisters to know, and to offer it from St. Chantal's own hand and pen. She succeeded in carrying out her idea; but it is to be regretted that all the editors who have followed her up to the present day have merely copied her edition with very little change, and have been satisfied with adding some letters never before published. It is these facts that render the fine collection of autograph letters possessed by the Convent of the Visitation in Annecy so valuable to a historian.

18. "*Constitutions de l'Ordre de la Visitation, contenant la Règle de Saint Augustin, traduite par Saint François de Sales, et les Constitutions des Sœurs de la Visitation.*" (Constitutions of the Order of the Visitation, containing the Rule of St. Augustine, translated by St. Francis de Sales, and the Constitutions of the Sisters of the Visitation.) This is a quarto volume and the original MS.

19. "*Premier Coutumier.*" (The first custom-book.) This MS. was corrected by St. Chantal and approved at Paris, October 16,

1635, by the Archbishops and Bishops. Another MS. copy of the *Coutumier* of 1624, which was also revised by St. Chantal, and three very valuable printed Custom-Books, one of 1628, the second of 1637, and the third of 1640, are still preserved at Annecy. The three printed copies were all used by St. Chantal.

20. "*Petite Coutume de ce Monastère de la Visitation Sainte-Marie d'Annecy.*" (Little customs of this convent of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.) This small duodecimo volume is, likewise, the original MS.

21. "*Recueil de ce que notre très-unique Mère nous a dit aux Récréations en ce Monastère d'Annecy, répondant aux Questions que nous lui avons faites sur nos Règles, Constitutions, et Coutumes. Revu et augmenté par sa Charité sur plusieurs Questions qui lui ont été faites de nos Maisons, cette année 1631.*" (A collection of answers given by our incomparable Mother to questions put to her during the hours of recreation by the Sisters of this Convent of Annecy, on the Rules, Constitutions, and Customs of the Institute. Revised and augmented by her Charity, in consequence of several questions asked her by our different houses, in the year 1631.) This quarto volume is the original MS., which was revised and corrected by St. Chantal. The first edition of these answers published under the name of *Réponses* in the year 1632, is also preserved at Annecy.

22. "*Entretiens et Chapitres de notre unique Mère de Chantal.*" (Our incomparable Mother de Chantal's Conferences and Chapters.) We have not seen the original MS. of these Conferences and Chapters, but we know three copies of them: First, the two spoken of in this *Life* (vol. ii. p. 161, note); secondly, a copy possessed by the convent of Annecy. It extends only to the year 1637, and terminates with these words: "This extract has been carefully compared with the original and found correct."

23. "*Recueil de Miracles opérés par notre vénérable Mère de Chantal.*" Several MSS. containing authenticated depositions relative to miraculous cures obtained through the intercession of the venerable Mother de Chantal.

24. "*Recueil de Lettres adressées au Saint Siége pour obtenir la Béatification de la vénérable Servante de Dieu, Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot.*" (Collection of letters addressed to the Holy See for the purpose of obtaining the beatification of the venerable servant of God, Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot.) This quarto MS. is very useful in establishing the reputation for sanctity enjoyed by Mother de Chantal both in life and after death.

These are the principal MSS. we have had in our hands. We say the principal, for we have seen many others, but they are of less importance, or not so old, or treat only of secondary matters, for which reasons it was sufficient to acknowledge them by foot-notes as

they were cited throughout the course of the Life. As to the printed works to which we have had recourse, a list of them would be too long. It seemed to us prudent not to undertake the immense labor of citing all the books written about St. Chantal, for it would be of little value did we not succeed in making it complete.

END OF NOTES AND VOUCHERS, VOL. I.

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St. Chantal and the foundation of the